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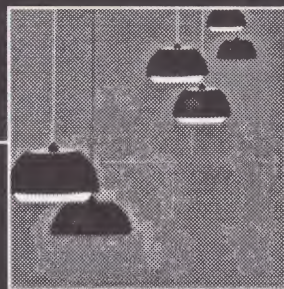
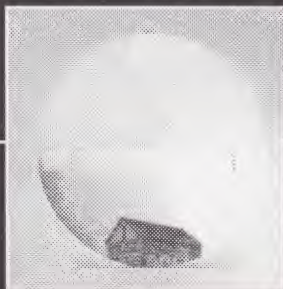
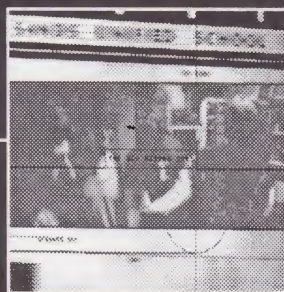
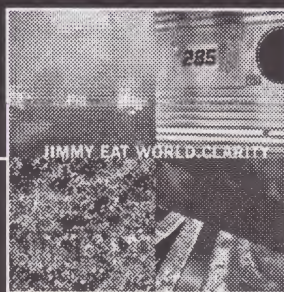
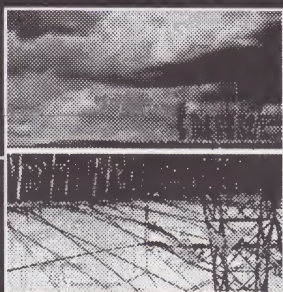
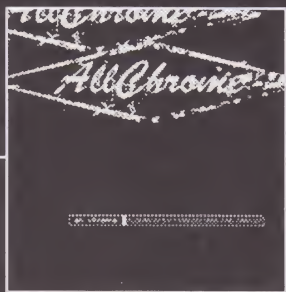
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MAGAZINE

THE MURDER OF IRAQ





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minister of information

Eric Action
the track attacker

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risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

I've allowed myself a brief moment of reflection before I run off to FedEx to ship this issue to the printer. In a whole history of "worst ever" production cycles, this one is the hands-down winner. There's no need to bog you down on details, but suffice it to say that I'm writing this introduction precisely a week after *Punk Planet* #30 should have shipped to the printer. Should have. As in it didn't. As in instead of going to the printer, we were stuck trying to salvage an issue from the remains of a hard drive that had crashed and burned 36 hours before we were supposed to ship.

Which is not to say that everything went smoothly before the great crash of '99, but in comparison, things like losing two cover stories, having writers flake without telling me and having our laser printer break down, just don't seem that important.

I was lucky enough to have an understanding printer and distributor—both of which were able to afford me an additional week—as well as a great deal of very nice friends who offered to come in and help salvage the issue, doing whatever it took to make sure we shipped out today. If we all did our jobs well, hopefully you won't notice anything out of the ordinary.

Even with the extra time and extra hands, it hasn't been easy. The only thing that has kept me diligent and on task and not angry and bitter has been my belief that this issue *has* to come out. The work that has gone into the cover story on Iraq is considerable and the information within it is of grave importance.

During the past week (and the weeks leading up to the crash as well), whenever I started dragging or when I would contem-

plate just pushing everything back a month, I would sit down and re-read some of the pieces from "The Murder of Iraq" and I would remember why I was doing this. Simply put, I didn't want to be an accomplice to the murder of the Iraqi people any longer. I don't even want an extra week—let alone another month—to go by in silence.

Another thing that helped get through this production hell were the periodic phone calls I would get from Jeff Guntzel, who wrote the piece "Finding My Voice" in "The Murder of Iraq." Jeff was calling as he and a group of other activists were *walking* from the Pentagon in Washington DC to the United Nations building in New York City. During moments of complete exhaustion, knowing that Jeff was out there in the freezing cold doing trying to bring the murderous sanctions against Iraq to an end made me pick my head back up, take a breath and dive back into the work.

I can only hope that the stories have the same effect on you. They are not just printed here to educate you on the horrifying situation in Iraq, but also to inspire you to take action to end them in whatever way you can. Just as Jeff walked along the side of a highway towards the UN and I laid my six foot frame on a 72 inch couch for a few uncomfortable hours of sleep every night in order to ensure that this issue got out, you too can—and should—do whatever you can to make it clear that you won't stand idly by as your country murders Iraqis. To remain silent or ignorant is no longer an option.

Please read this issue closely. There are lives at stake.

DAN

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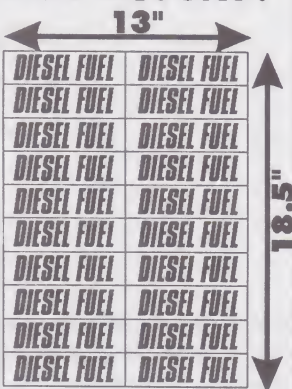
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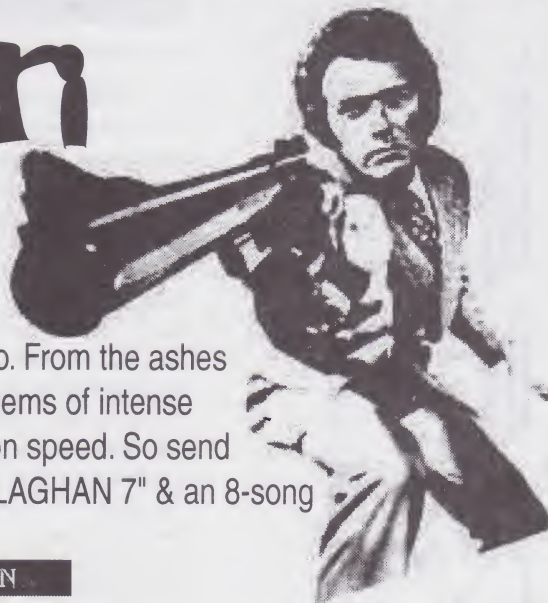
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Define "Denial"

Dear Punk Planet,

Hopefully this letter isn't too outdated by the time I am able to finish it and send it. I would like to remind any present or future writers for *PP* that when they are writing about "the scene," if such an all-encompassing word even makes sense anymore, that the scene does not specifically revolve around the writer and how he or she feels, and that what goes on in his/her local scene may not be true of "the scene" in general. He/she may also want to be careful of giving the impression that they are speaking for more people than just her/himself or that their opinion or experience is law. In other words, I was a little disappointed with Mimi Nguyen's article in *PP*28, "Looking for Race in Punk." Articles written this way, lashing out at "white boys with pencil dicks," etc... may do more harm than good, perhaps turning off those it was meant to enlighten.

One drawback is that the article is written in a style that conveys she is speaking for all people of color and that this is how each and every one of them feels. I never saw any phrases such as "I have found" or "A problem that I have with punk in America is..." The statements are all along the lines of these: "There's always talk in punk about 'making room' for the voices of people of color" (is there??) "Differences are seen as potentially divisive. Some—like race or gender—are seen as more divisive than others" (are they??). It would be interesting to hear responses to this article from other people of color in the scene or to have an article written by a person of color who enjoys their local "mixed" scene ("mixed" meaning composed of whites and non-whites, for lack of a better word). It also of course has to do with each individual's attitude in general. My boyfriend ("non-white") and I ("white") both laughed at the tales of things she had found people saying in zines, especially the one about the possible Ethiopian ancestor leading a white chick to proclaim she was African from here on in. How can whitey act so white? But Mimi is frustrated by this type of thing, and maybe that is because of or at least compounded by the fact that her immediate local scene, the group of people she has to interact with on a regular basis, sounds pretty screwy. (I'd like to know what scene this is that is recruiting people of color, deciding to "make room" for their voices and deciding not to be white. It sounds horrible)

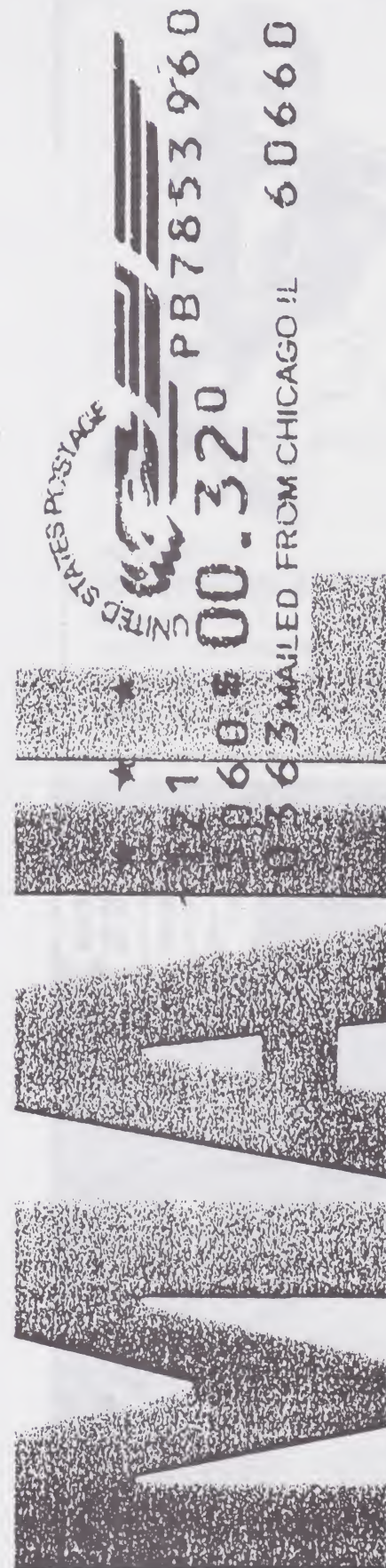
The article also downplays the fact that she is not addressing all white people. Only one small paragraph states, "I don't mean to indict everyone who fits 'whitestraightboy'" and it is easy to forget that among the many times that the term "white-boy" or "white" are used, on top of the fact that it is almost halfway through the article before this is

mentioned. My feeling is that these problems may cause the article to be rejected by the people who may have learned something from it otherwise.

I have been part of two difference scenes (two different cities, I mean) and the scene I am in now hardly has any "non-whites" in it. I can imagine people in this scene reading this article and losing the point in all the anger and name-calling within it. Remember now, these people do not have regular contact with "non-whites" in the scene and with Mimi's article written in a language that expresses that she is speaking for all people of color in the scene, they may believe that all people of color in the scene are as angry and frustrated as she is within the scene. Which they may or may not be, who knows. How each and every one of them feels may depend largely on what goes on locally. It may do harm in the respect that if some ignorant white kid read an article like this and then perhaps a Latina starts hanging out, are they really going to feel at ease around her or will they always be dwelling on the racial differences between them and wondering if she in fact hates them all or views them as privileged snots? I have seen white people in this scene turned off to even mentioning different races, cultures etc because they have been made to feel it's the wrong thing to do. Made to feel this way by angry people, especially white people, may be the very ones Mimi was aiming her article at. She also mentions that "of course it is always those of us who are 'other' who are called upon to transcend these [categories] to become "just human"—to enter a neutral state which presumably white straight men have got down pat without even trying." But hadn't she just been frustrated on the preceding page when she was relating how the white folks were trying too hard and in ridiculous ways?

I simply don't feel like an angry article like this will help very much. I would have found it more useful if she had focused on what I had thought she had promised to focus on the beginning of the article: "My point is this: we need to examine our categories, the words we use and how we use them, for the exclusions we make when we oh-so-casually invoke them." Not until the final three paragraphs does she give any concrete suggestions as to how we can do this. The rest of the article seems to just tell a lot of people what they already know: racism is a system of power; white people get certain benefits in this particular society just by being white; everyone's got different cultures that they come from, etc. This is old news to a lot of us. But the people who may be blind to these points may have stopped reading on page one or dismissed the article as the ravings of an angry racist, just due to phrases such as, "blood is gonna flow."

According to Mimi, I am guilty of the Punk is Equal Opportunity and Invisibility syn-



dromes. I enjoyed being part of a scene which was for the most part color-blind. It was a welcome change from the rest of the people I would interact with in other parts of my life such as my job, where people of different cultures didn't interact much and didn't know or care too much about each other. Although the scene doesn't exist in a vacuum, I would hope everyone in it found it and still finds it an improvement over other options. I also would hope that if any of my friend's cultures were really important to them and if they wanted to share some of it with me, they would. Some already do. And I grew up with the influences of two "old-world" cultures, but for me the focus of the scene isn't its multicultural aspect, it is the music and our rejection or at least examination of what we are force-fed by society. If we can completely deprogram ourselves and our language from the system of power of racism as Mimi urges, then that would be even better. But I'm not convinced that that is possible for everyone or even anyone. All we can do is our best.

KC
Boston, MA

So I called up my Angry Colored Queer Girl collaborator Aloofah (of the queer pop ensemble Sta-Prest) for a snide response, but all she had for me was this, echoing a far-too-familiar gut feeling, "I'm doing my dishes, but let me tell you this: I'm so completely bored with this argument that I can't even bother to think of a snide response."

And look here: I'm admittedly bored with this too, but I have to ask: if my essay was all "old news" to KC (though I would suggest she read it again), why does she have such a problem admitting that there's even a problem in punk?

So I'm not going to bother with a point-by-point rebuttal about color-blindness, hyper-individualism, whatever, because that, obviously, would be pointless; it would amount to a reiteration of my whole essay. KC's letter, however, proves several key themes from my argument, chief among them: when differences of race (or class or gender or sexuality) erupt, appeals are made to a "common culture"—here being punk—in order to flatten, soothe, or bang them out.

Instead of just re-writing my whole essay for KC's benefit, I think it'd be way more interesting to look at *how* exactly KC tries to dismiss the issue of race in punk. Throwing up fake "issues" and bogus contradictions, KC does a lot of arm-waving and feet-shuffling in order to hide her discomfort with my basic premise, that there even *is* a problem. What she attempts to do to deny both is make it *my* problem: one, by trying to isolate me both in "the scene" and in my critiques, and two, by suggesting that my "anger" is an over-reaction, that I'll sink my own boat as white kids simply, automatically regress when called out.

My response? While I'm the last person to ever claim to speak for *all* people of color, neither am I

speaking "just" for myself: I was and am speaking from a very conscious political position. And I deliberately didn't write the article as an inventory of "my experiences;" I didn't want the accompanying critiques to be then dismissed as individual and isolated to me, a personal pathology, i.e., the crazy colored girl scorned. KC plowed ahead to do so anyway in suggesting that perhaps my "anger" was particular to my experience in my "local scene," and therefore particular to *me*, wondering why I didn't interject more personal "I" statements, et cetera. Moreover, her assertions about "local scenes" and the impossibility of generalizing about a scene ignores the level at which punk operates as a public forum that exceeds regional boundaries (i.e., in zines like *Punk Planet*) and as a subculture that is inevitably implicated in dominant ideologies and (uneven) social relations.

But since I sometimes like to do things by committee, I called up Jose Palafox (a Chicano columnist for *MaximumRocknRoll* definitely worth reading) to get his reaction to the notion that maybe I'm simply bitter. Instead, he assured me that I was not, asking, "If there isn't a problem about race in punk, why are we talking about it?"

Now maybe it's possible to construe Jose, Aloofah and I as pathological individuals with similarly isolated experiences as people of color involved (at one point in time) with the p-rock. Maybe, if you're stretching it. But then there's Bianca Ortiz (*Mamasita*), Lauren Martin (*You Might as Well Live*), Kristy Chan (*Tennis & Violins*), Christina Varga (*The Bakery*), as well as all the contributors to the compilation zine *Evolution of a Race Riot*, et cetera. None of us claim to speak for all people of color, but that's not the point — we're not just a bunch of bitter ol' biddies, we're all engaged with very conscious political critique of the ways (note the plural, please) in which, yes, race gets talked about in punk but more, *in punk as a reflection of dominant race relations in the U.S.* Punk is just ONE example of the whole of these social hierarchies which we — lucky us — get to deal with everyday.

But again, in characterizing my critiques as merely an expression of personal anger KC implies that I'm *not* engaged in a conscious politics, just bitter, a well-worn tactic that's historically been used against minoritarian populations that have sought redress, from the original Civil Rights and Black Power movements to multiple feminisms. (We're so cute when we're angry!)

So while draining her sink Aloofah made the following observation: that KC's response mirrors a mainstream, right-of-center critique of movements and activists of color as "too angry," in which our "anger" becomes the *cause* of racial inequality — driving whites to become defensive, bitter and retroactively racist — instead of its *effect*. This, I suppose, is how KC sees my anger doing "more harm than good," that I'm *creating* the racist attitudes I'm critiquing by "over-reacting" or being "too angry." (Hello, what?!) And there's a potential threat in here somewhere: that if I piss off the whiteboys,

whatever I get, I deserve—?

It's funny (ironic, not funny ha-ha) — punk, being all about white male anger, can't take it when Others (people of color, queers, poor people, women, and combinations thereof) dish it out.



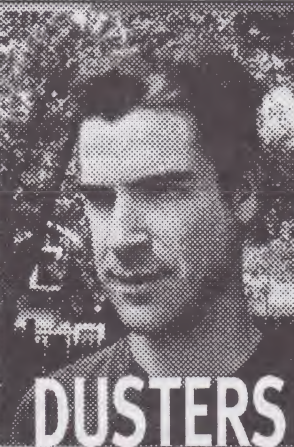
Now let me tell you about my "race girl" fatigue. I've been doing this for years, making these critiques, and I'm bored with re-hashing Race & Racism 101, with insisting that there even *is* a problem with the ways race gets dealt with (or not, as the case is here) in punk rock. It's such a non-conversation, that this —responding to KC's letter to PP— feels like a waste of time and energy. It feels useless to respond to someone who sees me as "over-reacting" or an "angry racist." It feels like talking to brick walls and I'm over it. Why should I be a "good native," saying "please" and "thank you" on the rare occasion you might deign to recognize me? Why should those of us who are frustrated with racial-politics-as-usual shield whites from the force of our critiques, the disappointment and anger we feel? Why does your discomfort outweigh mine? To quote Bianca Ortiz from *Mamasita*: "I want real dialogue about real shit without it being antagonistic, strained, or useless. So if I never write back to you or bother talking to you or refuse to fucking educate you when you tell me what a big racist you are [or what a big racist I am] — now you know why."

So that honestly, I don't care if you, KC, or other "ignorant white kids" (her words) are put off by me. I'm not interested in holding hands or making nice-nice. Arguing that I'm alienating those who might have otherwise listened is way flimsy — it's not my goal to accommodate their feelings or do violence to myself by making that kind of compromise. And c'mon, kids who won't listen unless I'm properly polite and demure aren't really interested in making a change anyway.

More, it's not up to me to do the bulk of the work. It's up to white kids who identify as punk to examine their privileges and deal with it. It's not *supposed* to feel good, it's not *going* to feel good. But, hey, buck up, lil' trooper, 'cause guess what: on my end, having to deal with racism doesn't feel so good either. And if some white kid has to think twice about how s/he approaches someone of color in the scene, great: it'll mean s/he's had to question his/her own assumptions and categories, in one way or another.


"All we can do is our best" is a cop-out, sounding too much like "why can't we all get along?" or a kind of "shut up and take it," seeking to return the issue of race to the level of individualized phenomena and liberal feel-good whatever that carried the brunt of my critique the first time. So while punk rock self-promotion is all about this oppositional stance, supposedly unpacking dominant ideological systems of value and beliefs, these —KC's letter in specific but also her attitudes, which are *hardly* individual or unique— are, in short, a defense of the status quo, And yo, now *that's* fuckin' punk.

Mimi Nguyen






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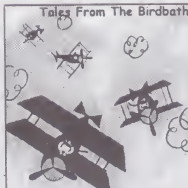


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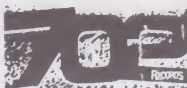
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COLUMN



JOSH HOOTEN
COCAINE & BLOWJOBS

It's only two and a half blocks home from the train, five minutes at a quick pace (and it's always at a quick pace.) Five minutes home that can really wear you

out. This whole neighborhood can really wear you out. The two and a half blocks is running an urban decay gauntlet twice a day from home to train, then from train to home. The train that takes me to work. The work that pays me enough to be able to live alone in a nice building but doesn't pay me enough to live alone in a nice building that's also in a nice neighborhood. This neighborhood is scary. No fucking around scary.

So I live on Howard Street. Invariably when people find out I just moved they ask me to where and when I tell them Howard, invariably they say "Wow... what's that like?" in a standoffish manner as if I just told them I eat pig shit for breakfast. They look at me like I'm somehow now less fortunate than I was a month ago when I lived in a better neighborhood. They look at me as though I shouldn't be touched, stood too close too, or invited over anytime soon. It's like people are afraid Howard Street might rub off on them, like they might go home smelling like it, or they might catch some of the bad luck and down and out that is my street. They look at me and wonder what situation would force me to endure such conditions. I must not have a very good job. I must not make much money. "Wow... what's that like?"

"Well, my shower has one of those hand held massager heads on it, the ones with five different settings." Invariably, standoffish, "Well that must be nice, huh?," like I just told them I took the gold in the 50 yard dash at The Special Olympics. "Yeah, it's nice. Masturbating with it is heavenly."

Howard street is the street that pleasantries forgot. Or drove through with the windows up and the doors locked, too scared to stop the car and ask for directions out. Everybody here is a tough guy. The elementary school crossing guards are badasses. The fourth graders, like evil ducks in a row, crossing against the light,

are badasses. The naked, limbless mannequins in the Salvation Army window have attitudes. There's something desperate in every face you see on Howard, from K through 12 all the way up to the old women and men. Something angry and frustrated. Something that feels cheated. Defeated. There's a lot of clenched fists shoved into jacket pockets on Howard. There's a running soundtrack of threats and obscenities being yelled out of windows, out of cars, out of doorways and alleyways. There's a white noise background made by the sound of grinding teeth. Every morning there's new broken glass and a fresh coat of urine on the sidewalk. Old newspapers blow by like tumbleweed, old drunks sleep in the precious few doorways that aren't locked up behind iron security gates. Everything about this street, in its cheap wine stupor, glares at you and wants to know what the fuck you're looking at. You don't hold eye contact long if you make it. It's gameface the second you step out your door.

"When done right the sensation is somewhere between jerking off and getting a blowjob. But it's got to be done just right. You've gotta keep the showerhead a consistent distance from your body. Too close and the water pressure is uncomfortable, too far away and you don't get enough stimulation. It's an acquired skill."

It's very easy to picture Howard's better days. Underneath the thick layer of downtrodden humanity that blocks out the sun and chokes the life out of everything you can see a basic infrastructure of what was once a nice street. It's a wide street with some very beautiful architecture, generous sidewalks and classy (though mangled and terminally dim) street lamps. From the street lamps hang weather-beaten tin signs that say "Howard Street" in ornate lettering, no doubt a relic from a time when people here took pride in where they lived. You'd be hard pressed to find anything to be proud of now and equally hard pressed to find anybody who even knows those signs are up there. Everybody is too busy looking over their shoulder or staring at the ground as they try to shuffle through unnoticed. I live on the second floor, eye level with the signs. That's how I know.

"It took me a few tries before I could ejaculate using only the water pressure. It's hard to stay focused using just the showerhead. It feels really good, but it takes a little getting used to. Like, I'll get hard

ISPP30

almost immediately when I start using it, but to get all the way to orgasm took a little bit of practice. You've just gotta be patient and really concentrate."

I was moved into my new apartment for about three days before I could get my phone hooked up. I kept forgetting to call the phone company and, to be honest, it was kind of nice knowing I couldn't check my e-mail and knowing that the phone wasn't going to ring. I was an island for a few precious days. The funny thing is that I'd be in the shower and swear I was hearing the phone ring. It was like a phantom itch on an amputated limb. Or, if I was masturbating, it was like when your parents were out of town and you were fucking in their bed you'd think you heard their car pull up in the driveway. Either way I'd still check to see if the message light was blinking when I came out of the bathroom, even though the phone wasn't plugged into the wall.

On my first night sleeping in the new place I woke up at 1:30 in the morning to the sounds of an argument outside my window. I looked down the 12 feet to the sidewalk to see this guy yelling in this girl's face about how she wasn't ever going to embarrass him in front of his friends again. No the fuck she wasn't, bitch. He was yelling at her, about six inches from her face. She looked cold and unafraid. I don't think he liked her not being afraid of him and all, so he pushed her really hard a few times. Hard enough I thought she was going to fall down, but she continued to try and look unintimidated. She was doing better than I was. I was scared. I really thought if she didn't crack and start crying or something to appease him he was going to punch her in the face. I really wished I had called and gotten my phone hooked up so I could have called the police. If he had started beating her up there was nothing I could have done to help her. Or more like nothing I would have done. Us white people, I swear, we all have some grand vision of what's right and wrong and we're sure as hell willing to stand behind our beliefs so long as we can get a cop to come and stand behind our beliefs with us. Or a politician. Or a somebody.

When I was looking at my apartment I expressed some concern about the neighborhood to my landlord-to-be. He was very quick to point out that this neighborhood was at the beginning stages of a big project of urban renewal. By the end of next summer this would be a

completely different neighborhood, he said. Really? How so? Well, that big vacant lot on the other side of the train station is going to be a 16-screen multiplex and on the other side of the street is going to be a big shopping center with a new supermarket and a Blockbuster. They're knocking down that building right up the street with the two liquor stores in it and building condominiums. What's going to go in the store front downstairs from this apartment, Chuck? Probably a coffee shop.

If I was really willing to stand up for my beliefs I would have yelled at that son of a bitch pushing that girl around. I would have told him to knock it off. I would have told him I was new to the neighborhood but pretty soon there were going to be a lot more twenty and thirtysomething white people around and when the rest of us showed up, when we had some numbers, he'd have to straighten up and change his ways. We don't like it when you push women around and we don't like being waken up late on a weeknight. I may be just one right now, sir, but soon there will be lots of me, drawn in by the Blockbuster and the Starbucks like mosquitoes to a buglight, and we all call the cops at the first sign of trouble. You and your hoodlum friends had better act right. You'd better stop hanging out on the corners in groups. Basically stop doing whatever you were doing before we moved in. We like words like "urban renewal." Goodbye corner market, goodbye neighborhood video store, goodbye mom and pop restaurants. We don't mind paying the higher rents if it means a safer neighborhood.

I wanted to point out to my landlord-to-be that when all that stuff moves into the neighborhood we both know my rent is going to skyrocket. We both know urban renewal means gentrification. He's unwittingly trying to sell me on the apartment and the neighborhood based on the fact that a year from now I won't be able to afford to live here anymore. It'll be much safer, he's right, but I won't be able to live here. Me and the tough guys, we'll all be looking for affordable housing somewhere else while more successful people move into the rehabbed buildings we used to live in.

"The first and the third settings are the best. I usually start out with the first. It's a hard spray. I use that for a while, then I switch over to the third. It's the choppy, more massage-like spray which, incidentally, feels really good on a sore neck or back too. I use that for

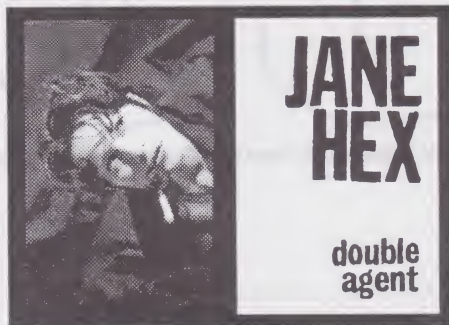
a while, then when I'm getting close to orgasm I switch back to number one. That's the one that makes me come."

Well, I'm glad you're enjoying your new place.

Yeah. It's nice.

...

Get in touch: astrocomm@macconnect.com



I had a dream last night of the new millennium. I was at an old woman's house on top of a hill, and my mother was with me. We looked down into the town where

there was a huge festival taking place. One of the fireworks came loose and traveled up toward us to shatter in a spectacle of sparks right in front of us. Later we were carried down into the throngs by an old bus, and wandered through empty alleys that were layered in boarded-up windows and broken glass.

I am trying to remember what I used to imagine the new millennium to be like when I was a kid. I didn't give it that much thought because it seemed so distant and so cloaked in mystery and so glorified with great expectations. I imagined that I would be all grown-up then, possibly married, possibly a mother. And it would be The Future, so my life would be blessed with unimaginable technology and pneumatic conveniences. It would be a bit like Blade Runner. But now I know that the dawn of the new century won't bring those things for me, and will likely bring things that are even better. Or worse. Or just the same. No one seems to know. The clocks will roll over, and a large percentage of old computer clocks will tumble back in time and think that it is Monday instead of Saturday. UNIX and Apple brains will be on time, but power grids could fail and so could air traffic computers.

My friends and I speculated on where we would like to be. Most people I know intend to isolate and barricade themselves, or find a secluded wilderness hideaway and hope they can still go online to make sure the cities haven't all burned down. Me, I don't know. I mean, it is only nine months away now. I can't even form much of an opinion on what will happen. I reckon all the extremist religious freaks will crawl out of the woodwork to welcome the apocalypse with outstretched palms. Most people will just get very drunk and make fools of themselves like every New Year's. Still others will take license to break windows and throw things. Some people will sleep right through it and wake up on the other side to find that nothing is really any different. But who knows. Maybe everything will be different, but only through our own design.

But the world will still spin at its alarming speed, and our orbit

will still dance around the mighty sun, and the moon will still tug and push at our oceans. Our pathetic little imaginary calendar that some puny humans dreamed up a couple of thousand years ago in order to separate their people from those of the other religions won't make a single dent in the course of the universe. I looked through a telescope for the first time a few weeks ago and saw the planet Saturn. It was amazing, because it wasn't a photograph and it wasn't on television. It was live, hanging there in front of my eyes, somewhere out in the vast emptiness of space, floating as it had for countless millennia. At the same time, as I peered into the viewfinder at its white dusty rings, I could see Earth spinning too, as Saturn skidded smoothly across the field, seeming to fly like a cloud. I felt pretty small, looking at the course of our planets as I stood on a freezing back porch in San Francisco.

Pretty much at the turn of every century for the past 20 centuries, the Armageddon is predicted by hapless Christians easily romanced by numerology. I suppose this one is pretty fancy, it being a neat and tidy "2000," but an equal and probably far more fervent amount of hype was assigned to the turn of the last millennium, too. End of the world, blah blah blah. I find it interesting of course, but only in the way I find all human tendencies toward irrational behavior interesting.

Making numbers significant is easy, because as was purported in the film Pi, numbers can be found in nature in every single pattern, and our world is composed of patterns, both chaotic and predictable—but mostly chaotic. We seek to make sense of the world by assigning significance and predictability to things in order to stave off the frustration of never knowing where we came from or where we will end up. It is the curse of the curious mind and the enlarged brains we were given. From the very beginning, our species has named the stars and placed meaning on natural events and measured time down to the nanosecond so that we can record our grand and wretched history more efficiently and remember to pick the crops when winter is nigh.

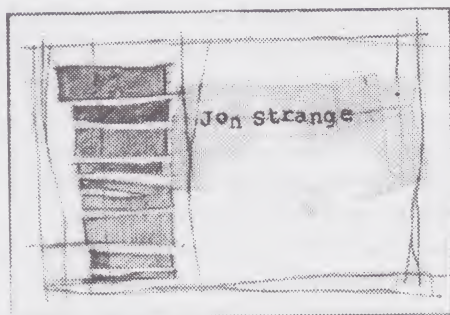
And what will we call this new decade once it is here and we are compelled to categorize it as we did every decade in this century? I still can't come up with anything. "The Naughts?" "The /dev/nulls?" Someone will come up with something more catchy, I am sure.

So while pretending numbers have meaning is fun and a pleasant waste of time, the fin de seicle is just another excuse for the pious to claim to know the future, and for advertisers to make a lot of money hyping something new and exciting. The fires will be out a few days after the new year, the power will be restored soon after, people will go back to work and swap stories of where they were and what they did, and soon enough we will all get used to writing "2000" until it doesn't look as weird anymore.

And meanwhile the rest of the non-Western, non-Judeo-Christian world, whose calendars are all much older than ours, will shrug their shoulders and chuckle at our folly, and wake up to a new day on our little blue planet.

...

My new address is: PO Box 14934. San Francisco, CA 94114. E-mail: jane@jane.org. URL: www.jane.org. Please do not put me on your spam list. Cheers.



See You At The Show

A show last week, two next weekend, one tomorrow. "See you at the show, right?" My house has been doing punk shows in

our basement for more than two years now, which is twice as long as I've lived there. We call ourselves a punk house, though I'm not always sure what that means. We're all into punk in some way: We all do some kind of activism, and we share a lot of political ideas. It's a nice place to live, and I like the kids I live with. But for all our talk about what a challenge we're presenting to the normal, socially acceptable way of living, I'm not so sure that we're doing anything all that challenging.

Lots of people our age share a house with a bunch of kids. They split the bills, sometimes they share food. They have parties together and invite everyone over. They go to work and try to get by on as little money and work as possible. They listen to loud music. What makes us so different? The fact that we have a big skull and crossbones on the front door? That we gave our house a scary name? That we entertain notions of being a "collective?" That we do all ages DIY punk shows in our basement?

Sometimes I'd say that all of these reasons prove that we're doing something different, challenging and creative. Every time we do a show is proof that the DIY ethic is worth protecting. I get to meet people from all over the world as they travel through our house on tour. The kids in my town can see awesome bands in an all ages, alcohol-free, anti-corporate venue. This is important to me. Whether a band is singing love songs or revolutionary political anthems isn't so important to me, as long as they approach their art or their music from a DIY aesthetic. It's important that we, as punks, control our art and our culture and that we not permit people outside of our scene to profit off it. I don't want our house to quit doing shows until there are a dozen other DIY venues in town. But I often wonder if this is all we have to offer. I don't want to look back on my years in punk and only have a list of shows to remember.

In the most recent attack the US waged on Iraq, a small group of local activists staged a demonstration outside the federal building. We called it a "Die-In." We wore bloody clothes and lay on the sidewalk around the clock from the day the bombing began until it was over. One Saturday, we moved our demonstration inside the

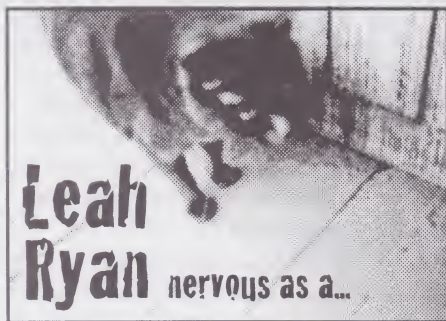
mall downtown, and we even managed to get away with it for about 20 minutes before security guards asked us to leave. While I lay there with my 20 co-conspirators on the floor of the mall, looking up at the shocked circle of faces that stared down on our bloody rags and posters with anti-war slogans, I wondered where the hell all the punks in town were. Twice that month I'd been to shows that had more than 500 people at them, but I can't remember the last time I saw 500 people at any activist event in Columbus. The usual faces are always there, about 40 of us, and a few kids from the scene are usually there as well—lately it seems that the numbers are slowly growing, which gives me some hope. But I know we're capable of so much more. At the More Than Music Fest we showed up with 200 kids to march in Columbus' Gay Pride Parade and protest Coors' sponsorship of the parade. We showed the city's queer community that there are hundreds of young queer people who have no interest in assimilating, in becoming yuppies or Log Cabin Republicans. We have the numbers, the politics, the creativity, and the energy to make ourselves a political activist force to reckon with. I don't really know that we have the interest.

I'm not really sure who to blame for that, either. How much is it the responsibility of the politically active kids to introduce these ideas to kids not so politically minded? How much is it a simple case of a bunch of privileged kids not wanting to ask too many questions, for fear that at some point they have to start pointing some fingers at themselves? Of course, we all have a responsibility to our community and to our politics to share our ideas and to encourage action. But I think it really is a case of privileged kids avoiding challenging themselves and their surroundings. Mimi Nguyen's article in PP #28 on race in punk called us white boys out when she said that protesting US foreign policy is "a perennial punk favorite." Objecting to the role the United States plays in asserting its international dominance is a relatively safe stance to take: It's like "rich white kids talking about people of color or Third World revolutions while avoiding their own role in systems of domination."

Even more frightening is the fact that it's often such a big step to get us rich white boys to even concern ourselves with these "safe" political stances, let alone to engage in any real examination of our own lives and the privileges we enjoy. So often I look around the show and wonder if any of this means anything more to the kids than a fun night out, a pit stop for their adolescent rebellion, or a way to gain a little cultural capital and feel cool. This has the potential for more, and we know it—we've seen it, and we see little glimmers of it every day. We've come a long way: Punk as a culture, as a community, even as a market is more stable than ever before in its history. Just as stability can provide a foundation to strive for something more, it can also keep us here where it's comfortable—hanging out at the show. I think it's about time we upped the ante.

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I'm looking for answers, damn it—get in touch: Jon Strange PO Box 10013 Columbus OH 43201 jonstrange@hotmail.com



OPINIONS ARE LIKE ASSHOLES

Everybody has one. I try to stay out of discussions that debate the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the history of the world, or

the greatest guitarist in the universe. I think that kind of superlative thinking belongs in beer-swilling mobs of sports fans, a place I don't want to visit. I really don't give a fuck who the most influential punk band in history was. I can see the chains of inspiration as easily as the next person. But "Best"? "Most Important"? Leave these arguments to *People* magazine's readers' polls, I say.

Unless we're talking about Jimi Hendrix, of course. I'm very grateful to have been born in the era when rock guitar came into its own and lived while such rock deities as Jimi Hendrix roamed the earth. I'll skip the discussions of the "genius" of Kurt Cobain (give me a break) but I'll be the first to jump in and sound off about Hendrix. The word "genius" has become meaningless, like "love." Who the hell knows what Jimi was. He may not have been from this planet at all. But it's pretty clear that he revolutionized rock guitar.

It's hard to imagine a time before electric guitar. In my house, when I was a six or seven, we had records playing all the time. My older brother played the Beatles and Dylan day and night. My mother played Aretha, Al Green, Bach, Marvin Gaye, Sly, Nina Simone, Miles. No Hendrix, no Stones, no Clapton. My mother made no secret of the fact that she thought the Stones were pigs. My brother's tastes (other than Dylan, the exception) were pure pop. Despite Hendrix' broad crossover appeal, he didn't make it to our house. Other than the Beatles, the British didn't invade us either. Though I was hardly culturally deprived, the guitar sounds I later came to love had to find me by chance.

I did a lot of wandering on my own as a kid. Somewhere, somehow, I heard *Honky Tonk Woman* and secretly fell in love with it. Similarly, I swooned over the opening guitar line to Derek and the Dominoes' *Layla*. I remember hearing and loving the Hendrix version of *All Along The Watchtower*. I was like an addict getting a taste of the drug that I'd be chasing all my life. It was like sneaking candy and wolfing it down in the dark. I remember when Janis Joplin died. It was on TV and my hippie babysitters were moved. *Piece of my Heart* gives me a fuzzy but forceful rush of childhood memory, especially the guitar lines.

Fast forward to more than 25 years later. I have a beautiful Fender Telecaster sitting in my apartment, circa early '70s, and a great little reissue tube amp. I'm no musician. I'm not really a guitarist. But I fucking love guitars.

GUITARS ARE LIKE ASSHOLES

When I was eight my parents divorced and I left the town I'd grown up in (the town that filled my head with electric guitars) and

moved to Massachusetts. It was a problematic move, and this small New England college town seemed comparatively silent. When I was a young teenager I knew that I wanted to play guitar, but I wanted to cut straight to the chase and make noise like a rock star. I didn't want to fuck around with scales or folk songs, but of course I did, because you have to—it's part of the process. I didn't like waiting for things any more than your average 12 or 13 year old. Guitar lessons bored me. I had a nice teacher; the lessons were something my (now single) mother could barely afford, yet I found myself blowing them off. Something about it felt too controlled; it was stifling and dull. My teacher sensed my boredom and tried to keep me entertained, but to no avail. My mother bought me a Yamaha acoustic after one of my cousins talked her into it, explaining to her that the warped plywood classical we'd inherited from some hippie or another was not going to do the trick.

After some jumping around I found myself living back in New York State, and the guitar obsession blossomed. I fell madly in love with someone who played guitar, and I found myself surrounded by guitars constantly. My guitar player boyfriend was full of philosophical ideas about guitars and the playing thereof. He didn't believe in lessons. He believed that the best way to learn guitar was to go off by yourself and play until you're bored and then keep playing until you can't anymore and then keep playing until your hands hurt and then keep playing. Also, when you find yourself bored with your playing for weeks or months, stop playing and think about something else until you really feel compelled to play again. I don't know where he got this stuff, but it worked, and I even apply it to writing now. For many years I ached to be a real guitar player, and I practiced, but I was never really good.

In the meanwhile I lived in a town where people said, "Guitars are like assholes. Everybody has one." There wasn't a person within spitting distance of me at any given moment who couldn't play at least one Velvet Underground, Rolling Stones, or Neil Young song. There were a few things I got good at. I could write a decent three-chord song, and I sang enough to get halfway decent at it. I could sit down with a record, and sometimes I could figure out chord progressions by ear. But was I a musician? No. I hadn't found my calling yet (it turned out to be writing) and I was frustrated for 10 years.

OPINIONS ARE LIKE GUITARS

These days I've been saturated with the theatre and music has taken a back seat. As of this month, my thesis is done and my degree is complete and I can get back to some of the things I abandoned two and a half years ago, like short fiction, my zine, and a social life outside the theatre. I still feel that pull toward music. I'm always coming up with band names but I never start the bands. I listen to FM rock radio to pass the time at my job. There is one (count 'em) one commercial station in New York that I can tolerate now. Among the clunkers like Everclear and Green Day I find Tool, Alice, Soundgarden and the Ramones. It's worth it. A few years ago, the Lilith Fair set had permeated the New York airwaves to such a degree that I could barely turn it on. That craze has quieted some this year. Now, while I'm stuffing envelopes for hours on end, I listen to electric guitars and I think

about how I really want to start playing again. I don't want to be a famous rock star anymore. But there's something about electric guitar that's as primal as the sound of the ocean. I may not be a musical genius, but I can make the kind of noise I always wanted to make. I just have to play until I'm bored. And then keep playing.

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Violation Fez #6, The Religion Issue, is still available. #7 (The School Issue) will be in the works very soon. c/o Leah Ryan, PO Box 2228, Times Square Station, NY NY 10108, or LEAHzz@aol.com.



In his book *War Before Civilization: The Myth of Peaceful Savage*, anthropologist Lawrence Keeley's analyzes prehistoric warfare and gives yet another

good reason for examining the lifestyles of hunter-gatherers to see where our so-called civilized culture could possibly be heading—but not for the reasons Keeley originally suggests.

Keeley analyzes data from prehistoric cultures to show that the ratio of deaths from warfare was nearly always greater in prehistoric societies than in modern societies. If tribe A of 100 went to war with tribe B of 100, there was a fairly good chance one or both tribes would lose 30 percent or more of their populations. This could mean the tribe may or may not survive after a skirmish especially if that dead 30 percent was largely made up of the strongest male hunters of the tribe. Moreover, the frequency of prehistoric war was greater than in state societies. Tribes, according to Keeley, were often continuously at war. Prehistoric life was constantly under threat of attack and/or annihilation.

In contrast, Keeley says state societies are at war about 40 percent of the time with the ratio of casualties far lower than in prehistoric cultures. He ends *War Before Civilization* by proposing more advanced technology, more business exchange and a global state.

There are a few problems with Keeley's thesis. His first problem is that he divides human history into only two parts: history and prehistory. Some prehistoric cultures were, by about 8,000 to 6,000 years B.C., literally planting the seeds to become what we are today (agricultural or post-agricultural), whereas hunter-gatherers have lived quite differently through today. By using data of these cultures as evidence toward what kind of societies were more warlike, Keeley includes chiefdoms—which are just below states in hierarchical structure—that perhaps in some of his examples (e.g., Northern European medieval clans) may have resembled states more than hunter-gatherer bands. In other words, some chiefdoms may have subsisted more like states even in prehistory and would have different reasons for war and battle for subsistence than hunter-gatherers. While some chiefdoms were clearly

agricultural, author Daniel Quinn has discerned agriculture from *totalitarian* agriculture, the kind that seeks to overrun everything else in the biological community (including non-agriculturists) for the benefit of agricultural humans (look at the European genocide of Native Americans or their subjugation of African Bushmen).

Keeley ignores examining points like this one, and in fact largely ignores the role of agriculture in human history. Instead he claims that "humans are no more predisposed to aggressive behavior than any other species that commonly fights and occasionally kills its own kind over territory, sexual access, or social dominance." And later: "If humans can occasionally construct huge societies involving hundreds if not millions of individuals *within* which homicide is nearly eliminated, there is no biological reason why such social units could not include all of humanity."

But what about the consequences of these so-called peaceful states, like class stratification, unemployment, disease, famine, drug abuse, malnutrition, social and economic strife, psychological dysfunction, etc.? They all appear to be unique to so-called civilized cultures. Keeley gives a nod to the fact that "the consequence of business, trade, and exchange may include penury and unemployment; but the consequences of war, even for the victors, are death, wounds, and destruction and, for the losers, the very depths of human misery." We may not be at constant war with one another, but without acknowledging the impact of these other symptoms of modern cultures Keeley is conveniently painting prehistory as less desirable. He doesn't mention how hunter-gatherers often fought to death to avoid being assimilated into civilized societies. Or what their reasons were when they did assimilate. Moreover, they way hunter-gatherers fed themselves versus how states feed their populations are radically different with resoundingly vital biological consequences. Keeley doesn't tell us of anthropologist Peter Farb's paradox—"intensification of production to feed an increased population leads to a still greater increase in population"—and how it affects population growth.

As agriculture spread in the Near East, it did so at a slow pace. In slight but important contrast, agriculture was practiced in the New World but it often didn't spread to other tribes, such as California Indians who knew of agriculture from Arizona Indians did chose not to practice it. Why is this? Physiologist Jared Diamond shares the same answer as Daniel Quinn. He writes: "Astonishingly, it turns out that... hunters generally have leisure time, sleep a lot, and work no harder than their farming neighbors. ... As one [Kalahari Desert] Bushman replied when asked why he had not emulated neighboring tribes by adopting agriculture, 'Why should we plant, when there are so many mongomongo nuts in the world?'"

In other words, hunter-gatherers, while maybe *more* warlike (I still have my doubts), weren't exactly suffering. They lived and fought as the rest of the biological kingdom lived—under laws that govern all of the biological world, where, admittedly, the value of human life was apparently forced to have less importance than in modern culture. Furthermore, the primary difference between us

and hunter-gatherers is that in their wars they didn't make it a policy to subjugate their neighbors or to exterminate their food sources to support greater growth in population. In contrast, as totalitarian agriculturists, that's exactly what our culture continues to do. Keeley doesn't mention that global dominance, clearly stemming from totalitarian agriculture, will continue us on a path toward solidifying our role in commanding our own destiny where we are the lords of the world, and the world is here for us to do with what we want. All for what? Lower homicide statistics?

Diamond outlines the problem as he sees it. He writes: "Archaeologists studying the rise of farming have reconstructed for us a stage at which we made one of the most crucial decisions in human history. Forced to choose between limiting population growth and trying to increase food production, we opted for the latter and ended up with starvation, warfare, and tyranny. The same choice faces us today, with the difference that we now can learn from the past.

"Hunter-gatherers practiced the most successful and long-persistent lifestyle in the career of our species. In contrast, we are still struggling with the problems into which we descended with agriculture, and it is unclear whether we can solve them."

Finally, if a population continues to support its expansion by overproducing food, it will eventually run into the inevitable problem of limited expansion and exterminate its food supply. (I sincerely believe that genetic cloning of food will have similar effects—or worse—to human health as food grown from toxic soil depleted of minerals. This direction is a stop-gap measure. It doesn't seek to address the core of the problem head on. Ditto with the "Earth First! We'll mine other planets later" mentality frequently advertised on Nevada pickups.) Our food quality has already suffered because of land abuses from agricultural practices—why we take supplements. Following Keeley's advice, we should forward our civilization toward a global one. Though doing so may present the illusion of healthier, saner lifestyle, we will continue to see the realities of this choice played out in ways as equally as gruesome, if not more so, as the life of prehistoric man that Keeley portrays.

Let me tell you about a dream I had. I am amidst a hunter-gatherer tribe of unknown origin. We are sad. Sad that there is no food during a drought. Older tribe members leave in the middle of the night never to return—the sign of altruism, to assure more chances that we will survive. More food, when we can find it, will first go to the women and the young. We persevere. Some die, but the food finally comes as it always does, sooner or later. I give my son some meat, and I ask him, "What does the future hold for you?"

The dream ends.

In my professional life, the teens I work with are often forced to look at what the future will mean for them. They are in every way imaginable a struggling population (drug abusers, gangsters, rapists or rape victims, etc.) and for today's youth not much of an aberration. If asked questions such as, "What does the future hold for you?" the answer is nearly always the same:

"I don't care."

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I started taking Spanish classes in seventh grade. Right before I began junior high I moved to Chesterfield, Montana. The only person I knew,

Courtney, was taking beginning Spanish. Eager to be friends with her, I signed up too even though I really wanted to take French. I continued to take Spanish classes in high school though I never really used it that much and wasn't particularly interested in it. It was an easy A for me and I occasionally practiced it with people when I waited for the bus or with Spanish-speaking people who wanted directions.

Sometime toward the end of high school I went to see Los Crudos play in their neighborhood. It was a sort of community festival with skits and plays in Spanish in addition to music. While my boyfriend at the time and another friend squirmed in their seats (we were the only gringos there) I enjoyed myself thoroughly, surprised that I could understand what was being said. For the first time I felt glad that I had studied Spanish. This feeling quadrupled when I went to South America. Hardly anybody spoke English and I was happy—almost proud—that I could communicate with others in their own language. Traveling in certain parts of Europe and in Morocco made knowledge of Spanish indispensable. Had I not known Spanish, it would not have been possible to learn Italian in the scant two and a half months I lived in Italy.

Of course, I am by no means even close to being fluent in either Spanish or Italian. I had a particularly difficult time in Argentina because the accent is so different from the Mexican Spanish I learned in school. Hopping almost daily from city to city

didn't help either as the accent varied from place to place. Not only that, but even having studied the language for (up to that point) about nine years still didn't prepare me to understand slang or the way people actually talk. When I moved to Italy I had no formal knowledge of the language but learned it more or less out of necessity. Since I was hearing and using it every day, all day, I became familiar with the way it was actually spoken rather than how textbooks tell you it is. I also learned a lot of slang. Unfortunately, my vocabulary was not exactly vast. I had to really struggle sometimes to get the simplest ideas across. I knew how to say "grape" and "fry" and "fuck off" but for two months I didn't know the word for "on" and I never learned how to say "about."

Living and traveling in areas where I didn't have a masterful command of the language provided me with valuable experiences. For the first time I had an inkling of what it must be like for immigrants that come to the US with only a basic knowledge of English or none at all. I finally began to understand how it's possible that my mom—who has lived in the US for almost 25 years—still speaks very broken English and doesn't always understand what people say to her. Fortunately for me, most people were pretty patient with me. They seemed appreciative that I was attempting to communicate with them in their languages. Even my occasional horrid forays into French and Arabic elicited smiles. I don't think I'm too far off base when I say that most people's experiences coming to the US is not quite as pleasant.

Since returning from my travels I've thought a lot about languages, how they reflect cultures, and what roles they play in people's lives. I find it fascinating that many people who are bilingual still struggle with both languages. It's interesting to me that some people who speak English with an accent use English words when they speak their native languages because they've forgotten them. My mom uses a lot of English words when she's talking with other Koreans. When my dad was interviewed about his gallery for a Korean TV program he said he really had a difficult time using only Korean without mixing it with English. A lot of non-native English speakers I know seem to have similar experiences.

Unfortunately the results of this fairly recent interest in languages sometimes leave me frustrated. For example, I'm always annoyed when I have to use the general "you" or "one" as in "one needs to sleep eight hours a night." Using the general "you" sounds stupid and saying "one" sounds equally stupid and irritatingly formal on top of that. In Spanish and Italian there are passive tenses of verbs that completely eliminate the awkward phrasing used in English when making similar statements. Spanish and Italian also have adjectives that can be conveniently used as nouns as well. Instead of saying "people who have been displaced" or something just as awkward, you can just say "los desplazados" in Spanish. There are also a lot of words that don't have direct translations that seem to be pretty handy. In Spanish there is "simpaticola," which is something like nice, generous, kind, etc. In Italian there is "sbattimento," which is a bit like a pain in the ass, something that's too much work, a hassle,

etc. I'm constantly frustrated by what I view as the inability to express myself in any language.

All this thinking about foreign languages inevitably turned to Korean, my first language. I find it pathetic that I can barely speak it and I actually get really embarrassed when I'm around other Koreans, especially first generation like me, who are all speaking it. I can still understand it well when I hear it but I definitely can't when I read it. It's weird though—I know the alphabet and can read it aloud from a printed source but can't understand what I'm reading. And though I understand it I sometimes can't translate it into English or explain subtleties. For example, I could tell you that "Sangmi nun ga suh," "Sangmi ga suh," and "Sangmi nun ga suh soh," all pretty much mean "Sangmi went," or "Sangmi left," (my Korean name in case you're interested) but even though I understand the differences between the phrases, I can't explain them to anyone else. Given this, I think any attempt at learning Korean in a classroom would be disastrous and my only hope to relearn it is by actually going to Korea or living in a Korean neighborhood where I have to speak it all the time. In any case I really hate not knowing my own native language and can feel the clock ticking away toward the time that it's too late for me to learn it again.

I really feel as though my (admittedly minimal) experiences with foreign languages and being places where I am not fluent in the language has changed my perspectives and attitudes about a lot of things. It seems to me that a lot of native English speakers in both the US and England are a bit impatient and intolerant toward those that are not fluent or have an accent that is difficult to understand. It is really fucking hard to learn another language, much less be fluent in it. You can try to be understanding and take the time to speak a little slower and more clearly or use simpler words without acting like you're talking to a three year old. And contrary to popular belief, raising your voice or shouting does not mean you will be more easily understood. Coming from personal experience, it's really disheartening, frustrating, and upsetting when someone is totally impatient with you when you can't understand him or her and vice versa. A little patience, kindness, and understanding can really make someone's day.

Knowing another language is key in communicating with people. It helps you understand your environment and the world around you. It helps you to better see where others are coming from and gives you a far wider range of possibilities for expression, travel, and knowledge in general. For some of you this may not seem like such a big deal. But it has definitely changed me for the better.

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Soundtrack for this column: DDI, Unhinged, Post-Regiment, Disturbio Menor, 7 Seconds, Gorilla Biscuits, Armia, Fun People

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Lisa Jervis
Cranky Bitch

"NO IMPLANTS and almost no retouching!" trumpets the *Perfect 10* editor's note. It's "The Connoisseur's Magazine," you see. They want to be your

source of nudie pics of "the world's most beautiful natural women."² Well, well. A backlash against the hydraulic/synthetic aesthetic currently so popular in porn?³ One more niche in an already overstuffed market? Or an attempt on the part of editor and publisher Norm Zadeh, Ph.D.,⁴ to raise ogling onto a high fashion pedestal?

I say "high fashion" because *PIO* resembles *Vogue* much more than it does, say, *Playboy*. Although the naked breasts help—and the cheesy and predictable likes/dislikes spelled out beneath each model's head shot⁵ clearly owe a debt to that old master of softcore—*PIO* turns on its head the familiar conceit of the girlie mag: to make the girls approachable, to claim them not as unattainable fantasy material but as the girl on the next barstool waiting for minimally charming Joe Schmo readers to buy them drinks. This tendency reaches its apogee in hard-core smut like *Club*, where smiling centerfolds show pink and exhort readers, via obviously fake "signatures" adorned with heart-dotted i's, to "drill me with your big cock!" Even *Playboy*, which is modest compared to *Club*, works on the assumption that readers would do more than look if they had the chance. But not *PIO*. They want you to gaze in awe at their models as if they were on display in a museum—or on a catwalk. And if they're bringing you the Tyra Banks of tits and the Helena Christiansen of hooters,⁶ you'll have to have the same relationship to their models as you do to those on the runway—from-a-distance adulation on your part, and cold aloofness on theirs. The big question here is: Why? Why would a magazine whose primary purpose is without a doubt to give straight male readers an eye-popping, boob-watching thrill⁷ want to hold the boobs so far out of reach?

The answer seems to be money. *Perfect 10* is "The Connoisseur's Magazine," remember? They'll leave the easy chicks (and the phone sex ads) to those rabble *Club* readers. No, *PIO* readers want high-class girls—and camcorders, sports memorabilia, and SUVs customized with bird's-eye walnut detailing and a TV and VCR. The same way that *Vogue's* editors and ad sales reps would have you believe that their magazine is read by women who can afford Tiffany brooches on a regular basis (and thus have no need for tips on how to find nice outfits for less than, say, \$1000), the *PIO* reader is supposed to be someone with enough cash to drop on swanky home theater systems⁸ and enough taste to eschew the split beaver.⁹ Viola! A classy magazine, fit to nestle up against *Worth* and *Cigar Aficionado* on the well-heeled bachelor's coffee table.

And this is the key to the no-implant rule as well. Historically and culturally, large breasts have been associated with low class, sluttishness, and stupidity, while small ones connote class and good breeding (In

spite of today's mania for an ample rack, this holds quite true, as evidenced by assumptions men and clothing designers make everywhere from on the street to the mall to the company Christmas party). With only a smattering of C or D cups, *PIO's* editors seem to agree with the clichéd sentiment that more than a handful is a waste. In the pages of *Club*, of course, a B cup is as rare as flat-heeled shoes. And, of course, implants—which have no other purpose than to create the huge, unruly, overly sexual¹⁰ ta-tas that are the antithesis of *PIO's* attempted hauteur—are common. And that's the last thing *Perfect 10* wants to be.

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Fussnote 1 OK, it seems almost too obvious to mention, but—almost? How much retouching is enough without being too much? Anecdotal evidence suggests that erasing a zit is kosher, but tan lines must stay. Although the magazine specifically notes that they do not erase wrinkles from girls' faces, that sort of claim seems meaningless, given a model's average age of 22.

Fussnote 2 And another question: How do they, um, verify the implantless nature of a breast? We all have our little ways of knowing (hint: Real breasts do not point straight up in the air when a woman lies down), but how can you ever be absolutely sure? Do they subject potential models to a touch test? And worse, it's much easier to fool a reader (cf. retouching, footnote 1). How can we be assured of that *PIO's* claim is truthful? Both myself and an unbiased friend I showed a copy to picked out the same woman as a faker. She was just a wee bit too gravity-defying. (Of course, it's possible that something my women friends say a lot when we look at porn—"Those aren't real. Real breasts just don't do that."—just isn't true, and some real breasts do, in fact, float perkily up front as if filled with helium, in which case the rest of us are about to become seriously insecure about our breasts. But that's another column.)

Fussnote 3 This, of course, is what I hoped it would be when I first picked it up. After all, an "all-natural" commitment might suggest that the magazine is interested in showcasing realistic breasts (which I don't think anyone who sleeps with women would deny are sexy even when they're slightly lopsided, floppy, or flat). But think about it: The name of the mag is *Perfect 10*.

Fussnote 4 Just what field would that advanced degree be in, exactly, to qualify a man to oversee publication of high-gloss cheesecake? Last time I applied to grad school, there was no Mammary Studies Institute or Center for the Study of Naked Girls. Art History might fit the bill, I suppose, but that's also another column.

Fussnote 5 "INTO: The ocean, sunflowers, mountains, exercising, my boyfriend, art. NOT INTO: Rude people, pollution, aggressive men, bad energy."

Fussnote 6 Not that *PIO* contains the monolithic boob shelf of the current Wonderbra years; readers are regularly treated to sights that are usually either concealed or rejected by porn—oddly upturned or irregularly sized nipples, variations in shape, etc. This, in fact, somewhat gratifying. Especially when you can tell that a model has to hold her arms high above her head to achieve that sought-after illusion of

perkiness. But that, like so many other things, is another column.

Fussnote 7 The old Playboy "I read it for the articles" saw won't cut it here, unless you think that a first-person lament about an appendectomy is trenchant HMO reporting.

Fussnote 8 Of course, as with Vogue, the percentage of readers who can afford the products advertised is quite small; the companies blow their money on the ad in the hopes that it will make their swag an object of desire for all consumers, even the cash-poor, thus imbuing them with priceless cachet.

Fussnote 9 Not surprisingly, P10's focus is exclusively above the waist. Models conceal their pubes with sarongs, bikini bottoms, and shorty-shorts, which preserves even more of the girls' elegant facade and works even further to position the mag as arty amusement rather than simple masturbation aid.

Fussnote 10 It is here that the core logic of P10 becomes clear: Unlike all other girlie magazines, P10 isn't selling the reader a fantasy girl. It's selling him a fantasy of himself. I am not a slaving self-abuser, he can reassure himself; I'm a connoisseur of the female form. We all know that, the vast majority of the time, the point of looking at pictures of naked people is to get hot, and then to get off. But with Perfect 10, no one has to admit it.



*But we communicate in questions
And all our answers sound the same*

—John K. Samson
The Weakerthans

An all night club in central London. Lukewarm beer and lukewarm hopes. The music is house, the most garish and commercial kind, so loud and permeating that there's not enough of your senses left to wonder why it couldn't be any better.

As is often the case in such places, I'm off in a corner, staring into space. Colored lights are flashing in time to the music and people are shouting every which way at each other. It's pretty hard to tell if anyone is actually listening.

For some reason I do some of my best thinking in environments like this. Don't ask me why, because I sure don't know. Right now I'm mulling over what I want to say in this column. For some reason I've decided to write about guns.

After living in England for a while, I've noticed certain differences between American and English people. One of the biggest is that English people don't like to be amazed. Or, more precisely, they don't want to be *seen* to be amazed.

They don't mind listening to stories of the unusual or bizarre.

British tabloids, some of which make the National Enquirer look like a paragon of responsible journalism, sell millions of copies every day. Jerry Springer is just as popular here as in the States.

What's different is the reaction. While Americans are likely to let loose with a slack-jawed "Oh my God" or "Holy shit!", Brits will mutter something like, "Yes, rather interesting, I suppose," or "Of course that sort of thing is quite common in certain circles."

One exception is stories about guns. Most English people have never seen a gun in real life, let alone seen someone get shot. They've heard it's different in America, they've seen the TV shows and movies, but it's still hard for them to get their head around the idea that half of all Americans own guns, or that guns are part of everyday life in many American cities.

So it's not unusual for people to ask me if it's really that bad in America, if the streets are as dangerous as they're made out to be. And sooner or later, someone will want to know if I've ever had a close encounter with a gun-toting villain.

The first few times this happened, I would just say, "Yes, I lived in big cities most of my life, I've seen a few guns." The way people would go all wide-eyed on me was precious. I started milking it.

Now I'm more likely to say, "Well, the first time I had a gun pulled on me was outside a bar in Toledo, Ohio, when I was 16..."

"The first time? You mean there were others...?" That's my cue to get a faraway look and start counting. "Well, let's see, it was a couple months later when the cops jacked us up and held a gun to my head with the hammer pulled back to try and get me to admit to a robbery, and then there was that kid who chased us down the railroad tracks with his dad's .45, and..."

By now they're thinking I'm running my own Jerry Springer scam. They're looking surprised that I'm still alive and in one piece considering the life I've led, and, yes, they're a bit, well, *amazed*.

I am, too, actually. I've begun to get used to living in a country where most people don't have guns, as opposed to living in a country where almost anyone might have one. Some of my experiences from the old days seem so unreal that they might have happened to someone else.

Summer of '68, I'm standing in the middle of Telegraph Avenue in front of the Bank of America, and a riot is breaking out. A line of highway patrolmen is barring the way onto the UC campus; bottles are flying and windows are shattering. Suddenly a kid, couldn't have been more than 16, raises a hand from out of the crowd and fires a pistol at the cops. One of them goes down, and all hell breaks loose.

It's only a minor wound to the leg, but it's still terrifying. Still, hadn't I seen the police do the exact same thing to a kid outside the roller rink back in Michigan? It was a typical Friday night: My hoodlum buddies and I hanging out drinking and trying to act tough. The cops showed up to arrest someone on a burglary warrant and he took off running. BLAM! One shot brought him down. Again it was only a leg wound, but I'll never forget the haunted, frightened look on the boy's face. He wasn't any older than I was, 17 or 18 tops.

Then there were the junkies who followed me down 11th Street on New York's Lower East Side, pulled their gun on me, and when I

didn't act scared enough (I was tripping on acid at the time), smashed my head in with it. There was the 14 year old who pointed a gun on me at the corner of Market and Church in San Francisco as I got off the bus. Having just seen *Casablanca*, I responded with my own version of Humphrey Bogart's "Go ahead and shoot, you'd be doing me a favor." The kid was so mind-boggled that he gave up trying to rob me, and we went off and smoked a joint together instead.

There were other times, but I just remembered that I'm writing for a mostly American audience, so I'll quit trying to impress you. I'm sure many of you have had equally hair-raising experiences yourselves. But I can't leave out the craziest gun story of all, namely my own: For a couple years, when I was 16 and 17, I carried a pistol most of the time.

Obviously I was completely out of my head, and I'm grateful to this day that some kind of blind (or divine, if you believe in that sort of thing) luck kept me from hurting anybody. I was crazy enough in those days to shoot someone, and there were times I came way too close to doing just that.

Near the end of the summer I was 17 my father found out about it and confiscated the gun, and a month later I left home and moved away. I didn't get another gun, and eventually drugs and sex replaced gang-banging as my main interest in life.

Some people don't believe me when I tell stories like this. Other people look as though they're wondering whether to be afraid of me. Neither is called for. It's all true, and there's more, even nastier stuff that we don't need to get into. But it's all very far in the past, and nowadays I'm mostly a timid little wimp who's often afraid to ask strangers for directions, let alone point guns at them and threaten to blow their brains out.

This was brought home to me in a stark and startling way the other night. Remember when we came in? I was standing there at the dance club thinking up stories about guns for this column? Well, just as I conjured up a perfectly terrifying mental image of that junkie's gun crashing down on the side of my skull, this very pretty boy walked up to me.

I'd noticed him briefly a couple minutes before. He'd been standing across the room, huddled together with some dodgy-looking older fellow. I figured him for about 19; he said he was 17, but (as it later became clear) nearly everything he said was a lie, so who knows?

I was flattered, but I was also suspicious. While I'd like to think my devastating good looks and unmistakable charm are obvious to everyone, experience has taught me that most people are capable of resisting them. In fact, nobody usually pays any attention to me at all. So when one of the best-looking guys in the place comes up and starts putting heavy moves on me, well, I had to wonder.

Still, I was intrigued. Who wouldn't be? I followed him up into a darker corner of the club, and he pressed himself up against me. Whispering into my ear, he said, "I know a guy who's selling some E's. Let's get some and go back to your place."

The thing is, I don't do drugs. I haven't even smoked pot in years, let alone anything harder. It's not that I want to be some old stick-in-the-mud, but after tripping on acid something like a thousand times and getting strung out on cocaine for seven years, I decided that I'd

better stick to the simpler pleasures, stuff like beer and caffeine.

I tried to explain this to him, but he wasn't interested. He just wanted to get high and have sex all night long, "the best sex you've ever had in your life," he promised.

Considering that he hadn't even been alive during most of my life, I had my doubts about that, but at the moment, even moderately mediocre sex seemed like it might be interesting. Still, I'm such an old-fashioned guy that I was thinking things like, "Do I really want to spend the rest of the night high on drugs with some person I don't even know?"

The answer came back loud and clear: not really. Not wanting to hurt his feelings, I said, "Well, that sounds really fun and all, but I can't stay up all night, I have to write this column for an American punk rock magazine, and it's due tomorrow."

I'm sorry to say that he wasn't impressed by the notion of writing for *Punk Planet* (which of course he'd never heard of), and kept on about how we needed to get those pills and have fabulous sex all night long.

The more he talked, the more I kept noticing his eyes. They were brown, really deep brown, and they were darting all over the place. But they always came back to me, and it looked as though he could see right into my soul. If I were looking to capture the essence of sincerity and bottle it for sale to the disillusioned masses, I couldn't have found a better source than those big brown eyes.

By now I'd stopped listening to him and instead was listening to an ongoing dialogue inside my head. One voice said, "This guy is wacko, get the fuck away from him," while the other one said, "What are you so uptight about? He's really cute, go for it."

For some reason, I asked him, "You're not even really gay, are you?" Suddenly everything changed. "You're right, I'm not," he said. I asked him what he was really after.

What came next was a story that changed every couple minutes, depending on what questions I asked or what quizzical expression crossed my face. One minute he was a poor, abused child who'd been kicked out of the house by his parents; a minute later, he'd acquired not only a girlfriend, but a six month-old baby. They were all homeless, it seemed, and the girlfriend and baby were waiting under the viaduct across the road while he went out to hustle enough money to get them a room for the night.

A charming, and tear-jerking story it was, except I happened to know someone who worked at the shelter where he was supposedly getting a room, and I knew that rooms there were free for the homeless. For some reason, though, I didn't tell him that, I guess because I was interested to see where he'd go next with his story.

It went downhill very quickly from there. He admitted that if I'd given him money to buy drugs, he'd have run off with it. "So it's basically money you're after, then?" I asked, and he nodded, not even very sheepishly.

I felt pretty stupid, and about 90 percent certain I was being taken advantage of, but I offered him all the change I had, about three pounds (\$5). Instead of being grateful, he got really aggro with me, and insisted that he needed at least 12 pounds more. "I'll do anything for it," he said half a dozen times, "I'll suck your dick right here."

By now the novelty had worn off. I got a little bit aggro with him in return, saying, "I gave you three quid, that's more than I would

normally give to anyone who gave me a story like yours, so how about you fuck off and leave me alone?"

"If you don't give me the money, I'll have to rob someone for it," he said. That was the last straw. I regretted having given him anything, and said so. Next thing I knew, he was threatening to rob me.

This would have sounded silly under almost any circumstances, since he was about three inches shorter, and had, if possible, even less muscles than I do. But apart from that, we were in one of the most crowded clubs in London. People get robbed in dark alleys or deserted side streets, not alongside a bar in the middle of a passing parade of disco bunnies.

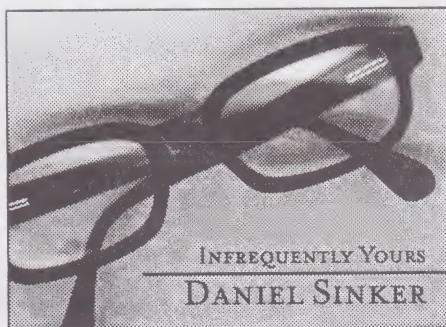
But for some reason, and for a long couple of minutes, it almost seemed real. I was scared. At any point I could have probably pushed him out of my way and walked off, but instead I let him pin me against the bar as he muttered threats and fixed me with those same piercing eyes that only moments before had been so seductive but now were verging on the murderous.

"This is ridiculous," I heard my brain say, "You're littler than me, I could throw you halfway across the room." But what I thought and what I was able to put into words were two different things. I looked around the crowded bar, and somehow it seemed that we were the only two people in the universe.

Well, if that's how it was going to be... Suddenly I seemed to come to my senses; I picked up one of his arms, firmly moved it aside, and walked away. He gaped at me as though I had broken some unwritten contract between muggers and mugees. A minute later I saw somebody I knew, and I told him what had happened. He looked at me as though I were crazy, and maybe I was.

I've talked to a couple more people about it since then. The thing that really gets to me is why the kid thought I would be a suitable victim. What could have happened to me since the days when I swaggered around Detroit with a gun in my belt, just daring anyone to look sideways at me? Had I gone a little too far toward being a nice guy? Had I become what my teenage self had most hated and feared, a wuss?

It's been a week now, and I'm still thinking about it, even though all I've got is questions, one of the biggest of them being why I sound so lame. But we communicate in questions, and all our answers sound the same.



"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both..."

That's the opening line to a poem I was assigned to memorize in third grade—

the whole class had to memorize it, actually. I can remember the day we were quizzed on it. Twenty kids reciting the same poem, one after

the other. We were seat-

ed alphabetically and being an "S," I had to sit there for a good 15 agonizing minutes before Mrs. Johnson got to me.

I was horrifically shy back then and I can still vividly remember having to stand up straight, clear my throat, try to ignore the 19 eyeballs cutting through me and speak.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both..."

My mouth continued to say the words, but my brain didn't bother to listen—it was too busy trying to make sure I stayed standing even though my head was spinning; it was too busy listening for my classmate's giggles as I lisped through the lines.

"Two roadth diverged in a yellow wood and thorry I could not travel both..."

I finished the poem—my ears ringing, barely able to see the teacher through my blurred eyes. I struggled to see her mouth silently saying the words "Thank you Dan"—words that signaled that I could sit down again.

My face burned and my heart pounded so hard it felt like it was going to leap straight through my chest. But I had done it.

...

It was a cold night. It wasn't freezing out, but it was cold enough. Winter had snuck up on me and I hadn't had the time to buy a hat or gloves yet. I blew on my hands and sat there talking to myself.

"Just drive away." The keys were already in the ignition—they had been for the last 10 minutes.

"Fuck." I switched the headlights off. The battery in my tiny car was small and old. I wasn't going anywhere and there was no point in draining it down, especially with sub-arctic weather looming on the horizon.

"You're too old to be like this." I leaned back against the headrest and ran my hand through my hair. I had been in this situation once before almost exactly two years ago and I fucked it—and myself—up something awful. I knew I had to do something—anything—differently.

It all boiled down to one thing, which I announced to no one but myself: There's no point in pining.

I made up my mind. I was going to go back.

I took the keys out of the ignition and pocketed them. I opened the door, took a deep breath and got out of the car. After a few last muttered words of encouragement, I started towards the door. It was only 10 feet away, but it took an eternity. My head was spinning, my temples throbbing and the doorbell kept ducking and weaving out of the way.

When you grow up shy, you eventually learn that the term "pull yourself together" doesn't really apply to you and you learn to swallow it down for moments long enough to make it through more or less intact. This was one of those moments.

My finger met the bell and I could hear it ringing faintly inside. I waited, feeling my face grow hot.

Finally, she opened the door. Her hair was pulled back and her face was all wet. She must have been washing up for bed. It was two in the morning, after all.

"Did you forget your keys or something?" She asked.

I can still vividly remember having to stand up straight, clear my

throat, try to ignore the pair of eyeballs cutting through me and speak:

"No, I've got my keys right here. I know it's late, but do you have a minute..."

With a look of trepidation on her face, she invited me back up.

It took me a second to remember to breathe.

"I've been sitting out in my car with the lights on ready to drive away for like the last 10 minutes. But I can't leave because I'm trying to figure something out but I finally realized that you may know the answer because I sure don't." My face burned and my heart pounded so hard it felt like it was going to leap straight through my chest.

"What's going on here? Are we just two people hanging out?"

"What do you want me to say?" It was a struggle to hear her speak over the waves of white noise crashing in my ears. "Do you want me to say that I don't know what's going on? That I'm really confused right now and that things are really complicated?"

"I don't know what I want you to say." I forced the words out. "I just want to know that I'm not alone in thinking maybe we're doing more than just hanging out."

We moved out of the hallway and into her room. She crawled onto the bed while I nervously sat on the edge.

"No, you're not alone," she replied hesitantly. "I was just hoping we could have hung out a couple more times before this came up. God! I was washing my face—I must look terrible!"

She looked stunning. "I wasn't expecting you to be all dressed up. I know this isn't the best time, but what can you do, you know?"

The answer to that question—at least in the short term—was that we were going to talk. A lot. We talked about how we both felt and immediate connection towards each other. We talked about past relationships. We talked about our neuroses. We talked about everything and we talked about nothing.

As the words came tumbling out, I slowly moved from sitting gingerly on the corner of the bed to sitting right next to her against the wall. Our hands briefly brushing up against each other, sending electric shocks up my arms. As the hour grew later, the sitting turned to lying, the overhead light turned into the bedside lamp turned into the moonlight and the talk grew more and more abstract and sleepy.

A song I used to love long ago told me that "the secret to a long life is knowing when it's time to go" and now was one of those times. She was way more than half asleep and I was well on my way there too, with a cross-town drive head of me.

"I feel like something has to be resolved right now," she protested when I said I was leaving.

I don't know much, but I knew then that nothing was going to be resolved that night. It didn't need to be. She wasn't lying when she said things were complicated and I didn't come back there looking for a definitive answer. I just had to say my piece and I did. I stood up and put my coat back on.

She groggily got up and followed me out to the door. We stood there, awkwardly hemming and hawing, umming and ohing. It really was time to go, but I didn't want to leave.

And then she kissed me.

...

I spent ages memorizing that poem. I got to the point where I could envision the entire scene: It was a cold autumn night and a man on horseback—for some reason I imagined the thing taking place during the revolutionary war—had traveled miles. He came to a fork in the road and had come to a stop as he pondered which direction to take. To this day, I can still see this scene perfectly. I can smell the cold in the air and hear the horse whinnying in protest as the man brings it to a stop. I can see his cape (it was navy blue with a red lining) and see the dents and road dust on his tri-cornered hat.

I can remember having to recite the poem to my mom over and over at breakfast before the quiz. The whole walk to school, I said the poem in my head. I heard the poem in my sleep and caught myself absentmindedly reciting it when I was awake for weeks after the quiz.

The funny thing is, I can't remember anything after the last line. But it's a line that has stuck with me over the many years that have passed since I was a morbidly shy kid with a shock of blond hair and a speech impediment.

It's a line that I come back to often, as I reach one crossroads after another while following my path. Sometimes I know exactly which fork to take. Other times—like the horseback rider in my childhood fantasy of the poem—I have had to stop and think about which way to go. Still other times I've set up camp at the intersection—sometimes staying there for year. But eventually, no matter how it happens or how long it takes me, I make a decision and go my way.

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

—"The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost

...

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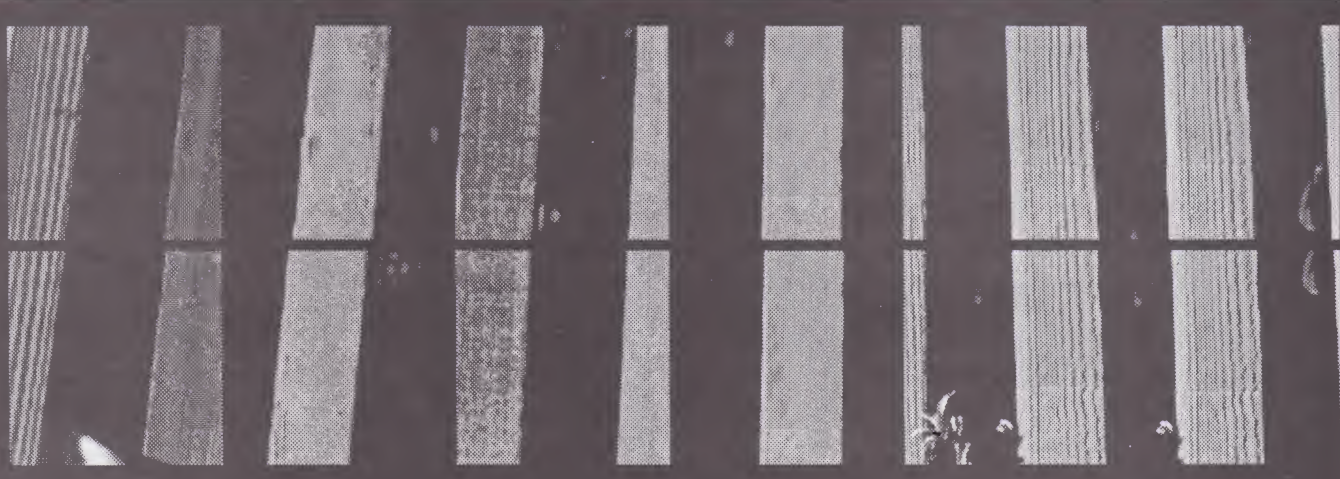
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well. Proceeds from the fest will be going
to the Western Shoshone Defense
Project and another local organization.
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info. Due to the fact that this is punk
rock, we're sure there will be some
lineup changes. All bands were con-
firmed as of the time this was printed
(mid January) The web page has info on
lodging, food, and many other things.
Thank you.

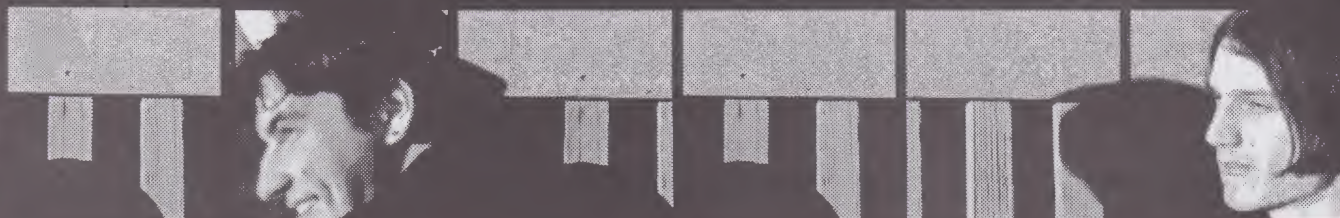
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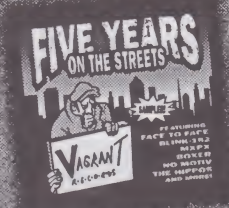
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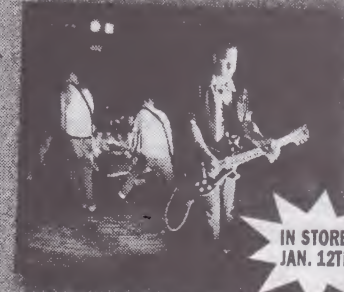
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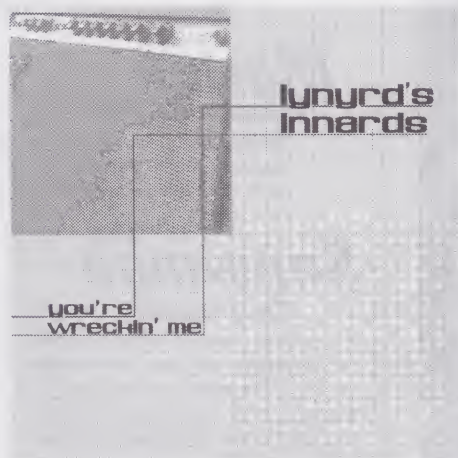
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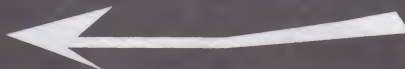
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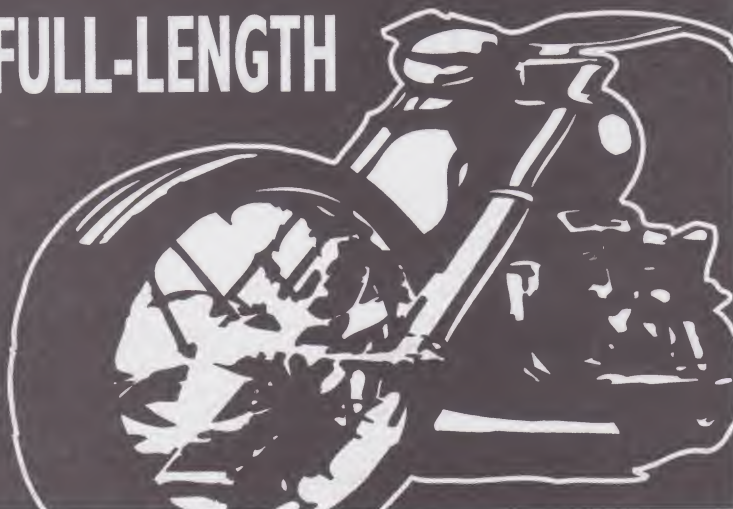


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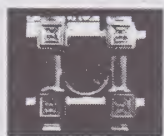
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I hate the word "reunion!"



B-MOB 99

Can't we just say we were on hiatus for like, four years?

Bratmobile: The Legend continues... Proving you can't keep a good band down, the seminal band Bratmobile reunites. After four years of fleeing the funk, Molly, Erin and Allison sit down with *Punk Planet* to talk about life after Riot Girl, the good times and why they want more of them, being a grown up Brat and what's in store for them in the 9-9. Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

So why reform Bratmobile? Why have a reunion?

Alison: I hate the word "reunion!" Can't we just say we were on hiatus for like, four years? I mean, Seaweed's still a band, Unwound's still a band, Blonde Redhead, Sonic Youth—they're all still around. Madonna and the Beastie Boys keep reinventing themselves, why not us? Don't ask why, ask why not!

Molly: There is no real reason other than that we dig each other and decided to try and see what it would be like to play together again. When the PeeChees decided to take an infinite break, I was like, "What am I gonna do?" Chris suggested that Bratmobile get together and I was like, "Yeah right!" But then I was in DC and hanging out with Allison and Erin and it was so fun and funny that I became all nostalgic and it seemed like more of a real idea. Plus, all of our friends seemed so into it and excited that it seemed a reasonable thing to discuss.

Erin: It seemed kind of crazy at first but there was definitely this weird energy going on that night, with the three of us in the same town together and all of us kind of taking a break between musical projects. A few people I didn't even know made comments that night seeing us together, saying things like, "Hey, it's Bratmobile!" It started to feel right. I actually got the chills.

Back when Bratmobile was first around, the band existed on two coasts at the same time. Even now, you all still live on opposite sides of the country. Can you imagine setting up in full bi-coastal style again?

Molly: We have nothing in the way of long term plans at this point. We had planned on taking it really slowly in order to be sure that it was right, but then Sleater-Kinney asked us to play some shows with them and we were like, "Sure that seems smart and makes sense." So now in the short term, Erin and Allison are coming here in February to practice and then I am going out to DC to practice for a while and we'll see what happens.

Erin: Our shows with Sleater-Kinney will be the first shows we have played together as Bratmobile since May of '94. ¶ As far as the future, who knows? We're in a bit of a better position now, 'cuz we've all graduated college. During the first four years of the band, we were only able to get together during school breaks. Now we can pretty much make our own schedules—or at least as much as our jobs allow us to.

Molly: The thing about being bi-coastal before was that we were in all in school. Allison and I were at school in Olympia, but I was from DC originally, so I was always going there for vacation anyway. Now I am married and have a real job so there are more logistical factors to consider. But everyone is pretty supportive so far. We shall see. Plus in back then, there was no E-mail or cell phone reality so it's a lot more possible to stay connected now.

What do you feel that you are bringing into the Bratmobile fold that maybe didn't exist before or

I think that we were just

maybe hadn't developed fully yet—musically and in any other sense?

Alison: I think that we were just beginning to realize our full potential by the time we played our last show we played in New York at the Thread Waxing Space. I always felt that musically, it was such a shame we quit playing together at that point. But we were having a lot of problems with conflicting ideals and getting along then and I was having some sort of nervous breakdown and was probably inflicting it on everyone—it was totally ridiculous.

Erin: I think that it's pretty exciting that we get to revisit something from our past but bring five more years of experience into it. It's like when people say, "If only I knew then what I know now." When Bratmobile started, I had been playing guitar for two or three years. Now it's been 11 or 12—that just blows me away. My abilities are a lot more developed than they were back then, simply from playing that many more shows and writing and recording and touring. I think it will be interesting to see how the songs sound with all that much more experience on all of our parts behind them. We have also all matured as people. We have always stayed in touch and gotten along really well, but now we're adults!

Molly: I have been playing drums now for almost nine years now, so I play a lot better. But there is now a fear that perhaps I will try to over play in order to compensate for the simple style of our songs. It's ridiculous to worry about that since at this point we have not even practiced yet! ¶ I think when we make up new songs they will kick ass way harder because we are all more skilled and



beginning to realize our full potential by the time we played our last show

smarter. We were kids, you know, so we figured everything out as we went along. In terms of business, I along with other people basically run a record company now, so I think we have so much more information and so many more resources at our disposal so we don't have to spin our wheels as much, you know? And it seems like we get along a lot more in a genuine way.

Alison: I think we've all developed musically since Bratmobile started—or at least I know that Molly and Erin have, it's hard to rate myself. And I think we've had enough time and distance from each other and from the general climate of the punk/riot grrrl music scene of the early '90s to better appreciate each other and the music and work we've been involved in. I'm excited to play with them again and see where this might go.

Looking back on Bratmobile, what do you remember most? And what are you looking forward to with Bratmobile 99?

Erin: Bratmobile came about at a really amazing time in music. I don't think it could have been any better than it was—there are so many great personal highlights and stories. Playing the International Pop Underground Convention twice in Olympia in the summer of '91. Doing our first cross country tour ever in '92 with Heavens To Betsy. Touring England in the summer of '93 with Heavenly and Huggy Bear. Having Joan Jett on stage trying to lend encouragement from behind my amp as our last show in NY collapsed around us in '94. It was such a wonderful time in the life of so many of our friend's bands as well: Bikini Kill, Heavens To Betsy, Beat Happening, Kicking Giant, Tiger Trap,

Huggy Bear, Heavenly, Fugazi, Autoclave, Nation of Ulysses. It was a wonderful time and they were great people to share it with, play shows with and tour with. Everyone was just starting out and just starting to learn how to do things like play shows and tour and we were all experiencing these things for the first time, together. There was a big sense of the Oly-DC connection in community and in helping each other. This part of the underground was only just starting out and just getting attention and finding an audience, so it was really our first time for everything. ¶ With Bratmobile '99 I'm looking forward to getting out there and playing shows and being with our friends again. Most of all though, I'm looking forward to working with Molly and Allison again. They're truly two of my most favorite people in the world. When the band started, I told myself that I'd only want to be in a band with people who I would never get sick of hanging out with. They are just really fun and funny and cool. I'm really excited we're spending time together and playing together again. I've worked with Alison more recently but Molly I think is just an amazing person and incredible drummer, and I'm so glad we'll be in a band together again.

Molly: Bratmobile was our first band so in that way everything we did, no matter how ridiculous it was, in retrospect was exciting and memorable. Like the first time we played in New York with Kicking Giant; going on tour at all; going to England. It was rad to be in a band at the point we were involved in which was, in my personal opinion, one of the most major times of underground music with bands like

Ulysses, Bikini Kill, Beat Happening, Fugazi, Heavens to Betsy, Unwound all out there. It may sound cheesy, but it seemed so fun and I don't get the same sense of things now. Maybe that's because I am older and not as free. I have this hope that things will be fun and exciting and maybe considering the lack of rad things happening in the underground now, we will be able to kick start something

Alison: I loved touring the most, and Molly and Erin were really fun to go on tour with. Sioux City, Iowa! Groupies! Krispee Kreem! Yum-Yum! I just wanna perform, and party like it's 1999, that's all.

What were the major factors that brought about the demise of Bratmobile originally?

Alison: Things just got so out of control with riot grrrl, grunge, punk rock, whatever. No one expected the kind of media onslaught we all experienced—or the backlash that followed. None of us were professionals, none of us knew how to process things, how to do good "business," or even how to benefit from the press. It was frustrating to feel so out of control of our own images and words. I think we all ended up taking it out on each other and taking each other for granted. We all had so much to prove, so much to figure out, so much growing up to do. I think some people wanted to tear me down, maybe 'cause they saw my face or name in magazines one too many times. People stopped taking personal responsibility for themselves and spent too much time blaming everyone else for everything. I ended up feeling like I needed to run and hide; to throw it all away.



I think if we ended up effecting even one girl positively, no matter how convoluted the message, then that's a good thing.

Molly: We stopped doing Bratmobile because of a number of reasons. For one, we were not really communicating as much any more because of distance—I was living in Oakland, Allison and Erin in DC—and so we were really not in tune with each other as far as what our goals were and what we needed and wanted from the experience. Also, the media scrutiny of what we were doing really seemed to cloud our own vision and as we were not really prepared for it. We had no internal mechanism or common ground for dealing with it.

The Riot Girl tag—or maybe it's a stigma—still continues to be attached to bands that spring from the “ashes” of that scene—I'm thinking of bands like Sleater-Kinney or Julie Ruin. Riot Girl is obviously going to be a recurring theme in the attention that is paid to Bratmobile now—do you think it will help or hinder you?

Alison: I don't think the riot girl tag has ever been a hindrance. It's cool to know that there's some sort of network or community—however vague or broken up at this point—of girls who are interested in what we're doing. I'm interested in what they're doing, too! I still don't know exactly what to think of riot girl, maybe 'cause it never was exactly one certain thing or agenda. The term itself seems a bit dated, but I will always support the idea of girls organizing. I think if we ended up effecting even one girl positively, no matter how convoluted the message, then that's a good thing.

Molly: I think in a way it is great because all these girls who have been inspired to do political/feminist stuff within punk rock

may be re-energized if they were into Bratmobile and, for example, never got a chance to see us, may now be able to. It may hinder us because people who are quick to dismiss us as being valid only within the context of riot grrrl will not want to check us out and see what a rad band we are and how fun our songs are. However, this is not a new problem, since our records have been available since 1992 and some people dig us and others don't.

The post-'94 punk commercialization “boom” has vastly changed the dynamics of the underground. It seems that only now, five years later, people are starting to see diminishing returns and are reverting back to a late-'80s/early-'90s mentality as far as viewing making music or doing a band. Bratmobile achieved its notoriety before the big punk “boom” of '94 and the band ended well before the boom really caught on, giving you a fairly unique perspective with which to view the whole circus. Do you think this extra knowledge will add to the brightness of the B-Mob '99 future?

Molly: Wow, I really don't know. I think one thing is that we were never really associated with the “boom” and so now we aren't associated with the “bust.” Our goal, as I see it, is to do this band as genuinely and sincerely as possible and part of that is to not worry too much about how we are being perceived or scrutinized. I think we know how lucky we have been to be even marginally successful without being an active band and we are really just into the idea of being together and seeing what kind of songs we can come up with.

Alison: I think music in the late '90s has become mostly shit, and it's totally due to the commercialization/co-optation of punk, “grunge” and riot girl. There must be no forgiveness for this occurrence. We return with a vengeance!

Is there anything scene-wise that you had envisioned or assumed that would change between when Bratmobile broke up and now that hasn't? Is there anything you're surprised has?

Molly: I am bummed that there aren't more good bands with my friends in them. I guess I always thought that even if our bands had to break up we would continue to make music and art with as much impact and energy as before. While this is true for many, I think there is much more room for new rad bands.

Alison: I think by '94, things had already gone to shit. Nothing that has happened since then really surprises me. Sometimes when I hear about people I knew who went totally corporate, I'm surprised, I guess. I'm surprised at how bad so much music is today and how the badness of a band seems to have a direct opposite correlation with how much money and popularity they receive. If you suck, then you'll automatically hit the jackpot! There's no justice in this world, I suppose.

What scares you most about the reunion?

Alison: That the world will no longer be able to comprehend us.

Molly: What if we suck? As of this writing, we have not played together yet so everything we are doing is based on blind faith in each other's radness and the belief in our trinity! ☺

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Action Girl

AY UN



This is when I am most excited about writing music, when you and all the others look up and mutually recognize, "Hey that was something, wasn't it?"



w i c k e d f a r l e y s

Funny-ass perveyors of fine-tuned complex rock anthems, I give you Boston's Wicked Farleys. Down to earth, easy to talk to and witty to boot. Charm will still get you a long way in this biz my friends, so never underestimate the abilities of the nice guy to rock the party. Read on and discover your new favorite band then go out and treat yourself to the records. Interview by Josh Hooten, AKA The Iron Tongue.

Tell me about records you own that you're embarrassed to have paid money for. Records you have that you hope nobody ever finds out you have.

Rob: You want me to tell *Punk Planet* about records I "hope nobody ever finds out I have?" I've been buying back certain records I find in thrift shops that I sold off because I once considered them embarrassing, ones like Aerosmith's *Rocks and Toys in the Attic* and the early Black Sabbath stuff. People give me a hard time about my Spice Girls "2 Becomes 1" CD single which I spent money on, but I honestly thinks it's a great song. I did a cover of it on my 4 track. It's probably one of my recordings that I'm most proud of.

Brodeur: I just remembered this the other day: When I was little, I would lay on the floor and listen to my Dad's records with him while he worked on bills and other table-height things. He listened to classical but I'm not sure if he listened to a lot of different records. He used to play the same Sibelius one a lot. I was doing big drawings of the Sibelius' picture on the sleeve, complete with liver spots. My father also had some crazy eight tracks by Peter, Paul and Mary, Tomita—electro classical, Gordon Lightfoot, Richie Havens and Judy Collins. ¶ When I started having some control over what I was listening to, Fine Young Cannibals—with the muppetesque Roland Gift, Nu Shooz, Led Zeppelin, Guns n' Roses—mainly *Lies!*, Quiet Riot, Leila K and a drawer full of cassingles were the loose stones at the beginning of the road. Brothers go to college, one comes back and plays "Miserable Lie" over and over and I don't think I need to explain the following years. The Pixies entered, along with Syd Barrett and the Beatles. High school bands started popping up here and there and I learned a Crowded House organ solo that made me think.



Was there a single record or handful of records that made you want to be a musician?

Brodeur: There aren't any specific albums that made me want to be a musician. I still chuckle when I say "musician" because whether I like it or not it implies some technical mastery of a skill, craft or art. I'm still learning the mnemonic device for the strings of my guitar and I've been playing for five years. So "musician?" Yeah, I guess. ¶ There's this line from David Grubb's new album: "Can you really play it or do you just trick it?" To some extent I think I've been tricked by enough music to start tricking back. Playing is so good for me because I feel like I'm learning to play songs I've been carrying around forever.

Rob: I wasn't even a music fan when I started playing, just incredibly bored. My dad's drum set happened to be in the basement, and that was more fun than whiffle ball. The only band I liked or was even aware of up 'till that age—around 10—because they were literally the only band whose records were in the house, was the Beatles. I learned guitar from playing along with Led Zeppelin records, especially *II*, which I still worship and play along with note for note.

Describe your sound using as many swear words as you can.

Rob: "Good-bye rock." A frightening percentage of bands that we befriend say good-bye to each other as bandmates soon after we befriend them—Boys Life, Emma, Kersosene 454, the Regrets and Guzzard come to mind. Many people back home in Fitchburg would say good-bye to their hearing, the guy at the door and their opinions of us as decent human beings after the first few songs of our sets a few years back. We were forced to say good-bye to Fitchburg as a place to perform after a couple years of that and a couple outright bannings from certain buildings and organizations. "Good-bye" was once considered to be a swear word, due to it being derived from something that used the Lord's name in vain. There were angry editorials in the local periodicals after the valedictorian of the first Harvard commencement used it twice in his speech.

What are your vices?

Rob: We're all dependent on Moxie to get us through our days, much like Andrew Jackson, whose first reaction when being told

he was president was to quaff the stuff. If Mike goes too long without it, the holographic signal most people assume to be his person will begin to appear static-y, causing many confused stares and redundant questions from others in the room. All our recordings have to some extent been tainted both directly and indirectly by its taste bud warping influence. Once learning to like it and seeing that our previously conditioned conceptions of what was supposed to taste good were obviously wrong, it was easy to induce that all other dogmatic Western rules and boundaries, be they placed on music, language, art or pleasure were bullshit.

When do you feel the most inspired and excited about the band? When are you the most discouraged?

Rob: I feel most excited about the band when I see pictures of us where my hair looks great. Also, when I find myself in the van moving in a direction away from Arkansas and BoJangles restaurants, I get excited.

Brodeur: A strange thing about the Wicked Farleys is this: To me it is the collaboration of all four of us that makes it work. We come in with maybe two or three parts that we've individually thought up—they might not add up to 10 seconds of music later. We slam them together and see what sticks. This is when I am most excited about writing music, when you and all the others look up and mutually recognize, "Hey that was something, wasn't it?" A song is born, ta da! But in opposition to this, and maybe this opposition is what causes the appreciation, there are stubborn individual quotas that always end up being fought for, anything from foundations to decorations—it seems like for us it's easier to tell when something is missing than if it's there. The operations of Person and Group are always varying in effectiveness. This can cause a lot of huffiness but really it just gets back down to a lot of noise and something springing with clarity out of it—just like a thought from a stressed head, or hail from a thunderhead.

Is the Wicked Farleys your sole vehicle of artistic expression, or do you make other kinds of art?

Rob: Isn't life an art in itself? One of my million other bands, the Maths, whose songs are about just that, allows me to exercise the other half of the brain that has been slowly and steadily dissipating like a cloud of

smoke since I got to Emerson "What the Fuck is Math?" College. ¶ Until pretty recently, our bandmate Ken was building nuclear storage containers for a living, which sounds like it could probably get pretty artistic to me.

Brodeur: The Wicked Farleys have been my most active outlet for about five years. I think back and I used to be generally productive: I took extra little art classes here and there, made strange childhood art, filled notebooks, shot videos, talked incessantly. The band has really given me some focus without narrowing my scope. ¶ I graduated from college as a poetry major, which is not very marketable at all, so I don't consider myself one thing or the other. I'm trying to get back to that point when it felt right and responsible to dutifully "make shit." It's nice to have the band and the poetry at a neck and neck pace—they really feed off of each other. Poetry has—and has got to have—a freestanding capability. It is important spoken and printed as a piece of language that spills over itself. I have never considered song lyrics, especially rock lyrics, to come anywhere near the context of poetry. ¶ When the assault of music is so much past the speaking voice, how can anyone expect a peaceful relationship between poetry and rock? Rock has its own vocabulary, but more importantly it has its own process. I like writing lyrics because for me, they come after the song. I don't say I want to write a song about some failed love or my alarm clock or transformations of friends to strangers. We make music and the words are already tucked in—the phonetics are already there. I'll write pieces of lyrics and then sit and figure out why these particular words showed up. The themes that can be discovered between seemingly random words and sounds serve as a much more accessible framework for people. Many find the need to relate to lyrics, I don't argue with that, but singing my diary isn't going to help anyone come to their own conclusions. At least I would be amazed if it did. People ask me what the songs are about and I have to ask them right back. I'm usually more interested in what they think. ☺

fish stories

with **seaweed**



When not belting out the sea-shanties for venerable, veteran, Pacific Northwest rock machine Seaweed, Aaron Stauffer is out in the ocean giving kayak tours, fishing, surfing, or communing with nature. Most days Aaron is the master of his domain, but read on lads and hear a tale of adventure and survival on the high seas, the story of a day when The Dread Pirate Aaron almost lost it all to Big Blue. And when you're done, do yourself a favor and go pick up their new record *Actions and Indications* on Merge Records and you'll own what is in my opinion the best record of the last year. Interview by Long Josh Silver

So what are you doing?

Just cooking some mollusks.

Mollusks? Do you do this a lot?

This time of year, yeah. My fishing expedition yesterday was a bit intense so today I went for something a little more mellow, like going and picking mollusks off rocks. You can get fucked up doing that too, but it's usually pretty laid back. I did it yesterday and I liked it, they were great, so I went back today and grabbed some more.

I heard something about yesterday's fishing trip. I understand that I'm lucky you're even here to answer my questions.

I never really thought I was going to die. It crossed my mind a few times, but I didn't really think it. I was in a car accident once—it was a head on collision and I was going about 40 miles per hour and I was sure I was going to die at that moment. I've had a few brushes with death, and yesterday I was definitely worried, but I didn't feel that it was my epitaph. I was thinking about my girlfriend and stuff, like what a bummer it was going to be for her. ¶ I fish for pleasure and to eat—it's not like I'm a fisherman. I think being a commercial fisherman at this point in the world is pretty unethical but I think fishing for your own personal uses is cool for the most part. I generally just fish for cod. Fishing for salmon, I think you're entering a whole new ethical game. ¶ Farmed salmon are basically created so they don't have the genetic makeup of your normal salmon—they're like sub-salmon. These sub-salmon escape from the farm and they go get all their crappy farm genes mixed in with all of the normal, über-salmon and it's bad news. I'll stop on the ethics of salmon, but these are the things that I think about. ¶ Anyway, what happened yesterday was that I was out there fishing and I caught a

black snapper and I saw this fog coming in, but I didn't realize how bad it was. I had snagged my lure on the bottom, and I hate to give up a jig because they cost like 12 bucks plus if you leave them down there, it's just this sharp, metal, death trap down there—it's not cool. Now, I already feel like a dumb monkey for fishing with a rod—it's not a very advanced method of fishing. Diving down with a spear and spearing your fish is an advanced method, but I'm not very good at that. So I sit on the top of a boat like a dumb monkey and reel up fish. I'm dealing with the stuck lure and I look up and realize that I'm totally engulfed in fog. I can't see anything.

How far from shore were you?

I was a mile out.

Were you out in the Seaweed company yacht? [laughs]

No, no, I was in a tandem kayak. ¶ Professionally, I take people on tandem kayak tours in the summers on the ocean. I work for this company that is very punk, although they're not punks, but it's very DIY and organic and all that shit. We're the mavericks of the kayak world because the kayak world is so fucking milktoast and lame. ¶ Back to the story: I was totally obscured in fog and I was trying to react like I was trained to. You're supposed to look at the swell and go in the direction of the swell or the wind. But there was no wind, so basically I just started paddling as fast as I could in the direction I thought was east, which is where the land is, but it turns out I was paddling north. I paddled for about an hour before I realized I was lost. I still couldn't see a thing. It was the thickest fog you've ever seen. You know when people talk about pea soup fog? That's what this was—you literally couldn't see 10 feet in front of you. I was starting to get freaked out and I yelled a few times just in case.

Just in case you were 11 feet from land?

Yeah. But that didn't work and I realized that my eyes weren't going to help me, so I had to use a different sense. I figured I'd use my ears, even though they're pretty fucked from all the rock 'n' roll I've played over the years. I heard some water crashing off somewhere, so I figured I'd paddle towards it. Now crashing usually means there's something there you want to avoid at all costs, like a rock that will destroy you, but I paddled towards it anyway and eventu-

**I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE.
IT CROSSED MY MIND A FEW TIMES, BUT I DIDN'T
REALLY THINK IT.**

ally I saw a huge black mass that I knew was a rocks. ¶ I was very happy to see that I was near land but I was also a little nervous that I was in the rocky reef area, which is kind of hostile with all these gnarly waves coming. It had been really flat and clear when I went out, but the ocean is subject to change at any minute and I realized that the swell had gotten a lot bigger so I had to find a place to land. Landing on a big swell, especially on a beach you don't know can be pretty treacherous, so I paddled in to check out the shore and all I could see were rocks and cliffs. There was no beach. ¶ Then all of a sudden, this big set of waves came and threw me from my boat. In a single boat, I could have just done a roll, but in a double you can't—you're thrown out instead. Since I was fishing, I had taken a double out. I got back in the boat and fortunately I didn't lose my paddle or anything, but I was definitely shaken at this point. I was already lost and freaked and getting thrown into the ocean puts you into a more freaked zone. ¶ I kept paddling and finally found this beach, but I couldn't really tell where to land because I was so obscured in fog. To see if I could land, I'd have to get dangerously close to shore—so close that it would have been dangerous if I couldn't have landed. I finally found a place that I thought I might be able to land on and I did—it was a perfect landing, which was kind of excellent. ¶ I got on the shore and pulled my boat up. I didn't really know what the tide situation was, so I just pulled my boat up as far as I could—there wasn't much of a beach there, maybe 20 feet from the water to where the cliff began. I surveyed the area and all there was were some foot prints of some kind of sea otter or something like that and this car. It was flipped over and upside down—it was mostly buried. Obviously it had gone over the cliff. It looked like some *Planet of the Apes* thing.

I'm guessing a place where people go to dump cars isn't a well traveled area.

No, definitely not. So I looked around and it was all shale cliffs, which aren't that cool to have to climb up. Surfers do it all the time, but I can't believe that more surfers don't die. I found a place that I think is probably the safest place to climb up this cliff—it's not straight up, but it's pretty fucking steep. I've climbed up these cliffs before and it's usually a lot easier coming down than it is

going up. About this time, I got down on my knees and prayed.

How long had it been since you prayed?

I pray quite often to tell you the truth. It's not like I'm a Jeremy Enigk type or anything. I wouldn't say I was a Christian by any means because I think who you pray to is so esoteric. I pray several times a week and this was definitely one of the more intense prayers I've ever said. ¶ I started climbing up the cliff, just trying not to look down and I was singing this song, "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes." Do you know that song? It's a little song they teach you when you're a kid. My girlfriend does work doing research for documentaries and she was telling me not too long ago about all these people who die in landslides and mountain climbing and shit—people in traumatic situations. You'd think they'd be thinking about important stuff, but they end up reverting to singing these little jingles like "The Flintstones" or something like that. I try to not sing jingles because I feel like that is corporations colonizing my brain, so I sang "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" because it's not a jingle.

It's pure.

It's just a little song about your body. I sang that song and I climbed up the 80 foot cliff and I was in this field that was completely obscured in fog. I kissed the ground. I was like, "Oh I love the fucking grass!" Then I thought, "I hope there's not a fucking bull in this field." That would be so pathetic, I made it through all this stuff and I get killed by a mad bull. I knew where I was, I was south of the town I took off out of. It's totally rural there, so there's all these fields with either nothing in them or some fucking mad bull. ¶ But fortunately, there was no mad bull so I got over to the road and waved someone down and got a ride in the back of her truck. I still had my fish and my water. I held on to them because I was in such a survival mode. I had tied them on a string and climbed up the cliff with them. I told the woman who stopped for me, "I'll just ride in the back!" She didn't want me in her area being all dirty with this fucked up fish. She drove me into town and I went to the office where we do our tours out of. ¶ I went to the office, but there was nobody there. I figured everybody would be worried about me, but I didn't realize it had only been two

hours. I realized that my girlfriend was supposed to meet me out at Mile Rock—she doesn't kayak professionally so she didn't really know the conditions were so terrible—so I booked it down to the beach. My girlfriend was just about to paddle out. She was in her wetsuit and I caught her, which was totally lucky. I told her the whole story and she went up to get our dog and a warm coat for me to wear because I was really freaked out and in a mild state of shock. ¶ I sat there waiting for Andy, my boss to come in because he was out on the ocean too and I needed him to help me out. He taught me everything I know about kayaking. He's a way more hardcore dude than I am and I needed him to help me with whatever was the next step. I was totally at a loss. Basically, I was just waiting for guidance. I just sat on the beach staring into the fog and I started to hallucinate. If you stare into fog long enough whether you're fucked up or not, you're going to start seeing shit. It's intense to just stare at gray for a long period of time, just like staring into television snow. ¶ Eventually Andy showed up and I told him the story. We got all his climbing gear and got in the truck and went to where I thought I had landed. I'd never climbed—like seriously climbed—in my whole life. I'm actually a bit scared of heights. Andy showed me how to repel in like four minutes. Basically he was like, "Here's how you do it. Don't fuck up or you'll die." [laughs nervously] ¶ I made it down, but it was the wrong place. We scrambled back up and tried again, but it was getting dark. I could tell that Andy was getting bummed. I thought I had lost his boat and I felt like a total fucking loser. All the joy of being alive had gone. I was thinking about failure and the feeling of failure and trying to accept it as much as possible. ¶ We cleaned up and we hung out for a while, then I went home and had dinner with my family—my girlfriend and my sister. We ate the fish I caught, it was really good.

It was totally worth it for the fish, right?

[Laughs]

No, it was not worth it. It was good, really fucking good, but not worth it. We ate and I went to bed. ¶ The next day, Andy called and was like, "OK, let's go look for the boat." Andy's wife had remembered that this guy had driven off some cliff and a friend of theirs is a fireman and had to investigate it

so they called him and he knew exactly where the car was, which was probably the car I saw on the beach. But of course, since yesterday, the tide had come up and I had pretty much given up on getting the boat back at this point. With that little beach and the tide coming up, I thought there was no way the boat was still going to be there. I figured I was going to have to pay for the boat and live with the shame of losing it. ¶ So we find the beach, but we have to go through all this rock to get to it. Picture Ireland or somewhere with big, jagged, kill-your-boat kind of rocks, that's what kind of beach it was. We were one beach over from the boat and we were going to scale over this rock wall to get to there. We put on our wetsuits and got all set up, but we didn't have helmets. We usually would wear them and I even wear one when I'm kayaking, but we didn't have them with us. The swell was pretty big, so we had to wait between waves to try scaling this rock wall. ¶ This was one of the more sketchy things of the whole ordeal. We're so close to the end and it's really sketchy. Every time a wave would come in, I'd have to climb up the rock and grab on like a mollusk and hope it didn't hit me. It was like eight minutes of sheer terror, but we got up to the top of the rock and we could see that the boat was still there! ¶ It was the best moment—like Christmas times a hundred thousand. I was so psyched, I couldn't believe it was there. For the last 12 hours, I had been calculating what I thought he was going to charge me for the boat and I figured he could have ethically charged me like \$1,500 for it, even though it would have cost twice that to get a new one. But the boat was there and it was in perfect shape. Then Andy says, "OK, you get to paddle it back." ¶ I launched right into this huge set of waves. When you're kayaking and you're heading into a big set of waves, you've just gotta go full force right at it or you'll get destroyed. I just paddled straight out as hard as I could and crashed through and made it into the safety zone where the waves don't break. Later, Andy told me he was watching and was thinking, "Oh man, is he going to make it?" ¶ I paddled the four miles or so home really fast because I just wanted to get home. I was

ready for the boat to be back in its little storage area. But this is how much of a jackass I am: I decided to take the unsafe route home because it's faster.

You did not learn your lesson did you?

It was so bad! I didn't want to take the extra energy to go and land on the north side of this rock where it would have been a nice, mellow, easy thing. I decided to try and judge the ocean and surf in on the south side. I was potentially risking my life because I didn't have a helmet on. The landing something I would do all the time if I had a helmet on but it's a big deal if you're not wearing a helmet because it's your brain, you know? That's how you drown—you get knocked out because you didn't have a helmet on. ¶ But there was no drama, I got a killer wave and surfed it in and did kind of wipe out at the last second, but it was nothing. It was a total cheap thrill at the end of my crazed experience just to prove that I'm a jackass. And that is the story in all it's glory.

That is more excitement in two days than I've had in my entire life!

It was probably the most exciting adventure I've had in my life. And between boating and touring with Seaweed, I've had a lot of adventures in my life. This gets back to my main point, the whole premise of my story. Basically, I'm not a punker, I'm a shack dude. I live in a shack. Shack dude or shack lady, it's not just a male thing, you're a Jill or a Jack and you live in a shack. You light a fire, you play guitar. ¶ Hardcore music—all those bands with the big noses and shaved heads—fuck those guys man, those guys aren't hardcore. Where are they getting their power from? From some electrical power plant that they didn't build. The guy who's singing is most definitely putting some power out—he's shouting and screaming—but when you think about it, that's not that powerful. When you think about it, hardcore music is a bastardization of the term "hardcore." The ocean is hardcore! ☺

When you think about it, hardcore music is a bastardization of the term "hardcore." The ocean is hardcore!

Thrill Jockey Records

Thrill Jockey is most commonly recognized as the home of critic's darlings Tortoise. But to say that Thrill Jockey Records is represented solely by its best-selling artist is to sell it short. This Chicago-based label is nearly peerless in terms of its eclecticism and commitment to its artists. Much of the credit for building the label into a safe-haven for experimentation and genre-bashing must be given to label owner and superfan Bettina Richards. Ever the egalitarian, Bettina stresses that while she may get the credit, that the label wouldn't be where it was without all the people and bands that work there. I got a chance to sit down with Bettina and talk about the artist's label currently known as Thrill Jockey. Interview by Jessica Hopper

When did you start Thrill Jockey?

I started the label in 1992, I was living in New York, my first record was H.P. Zinker—a little prog rock for ya. The second was a Gaunt 10" and the third was a Gorilla record. I was running everything out of my house on Avenue C and working at Pier Platters in Hoboken.

And what was the impetus for starting the label?

I had worked at a couple bigger labels. I worked at Atlantic.

Where you signed Eleventh Dream Day...

...and The Lemonheads. [laughs] They got successful after I left. I really felt like that that environment was not for me. There was no one I worked with that I could talk about shows with and, more importantly, I had problems with the kind of bands I was working with. I felt funny bringing them on with certain expectations but I didn't feel that where I was working could fulfill those expecta-

tations. I didn't want to be a hypocrit and try and bring people to the label saying it was so great when I knew it wouldn't be. I had been doing that about three and a half years when I decided to do Thrill Jockey. Decidedly, to give up the fat paycheck wasn't that hard because I was really unhappy with my life and the life I was creating for other people. I hated my job and I hated what the whole process did to the bands that I worked with. But I'm not one of those people who thinks that all major labels are evil—they serve a purpose. If your goals are attainable for what they can do for you, then maybe they can be an OK place to be. If you listen to the bands that I put out, it's not that different than the music I was working with at the majors. I just really thought I could treat everyone better and do a better job. Most people think they can make majors work for them and honestly, you can't—most people can't. Starting the label was really easy since I had so many friends who were already doing their own. Indie rock doesn't really mean anything to me, but independent labels and distribution and bands that are trying to do things independent—there is definitely a community among there and I have always found it to be very helpful and forthcoming.

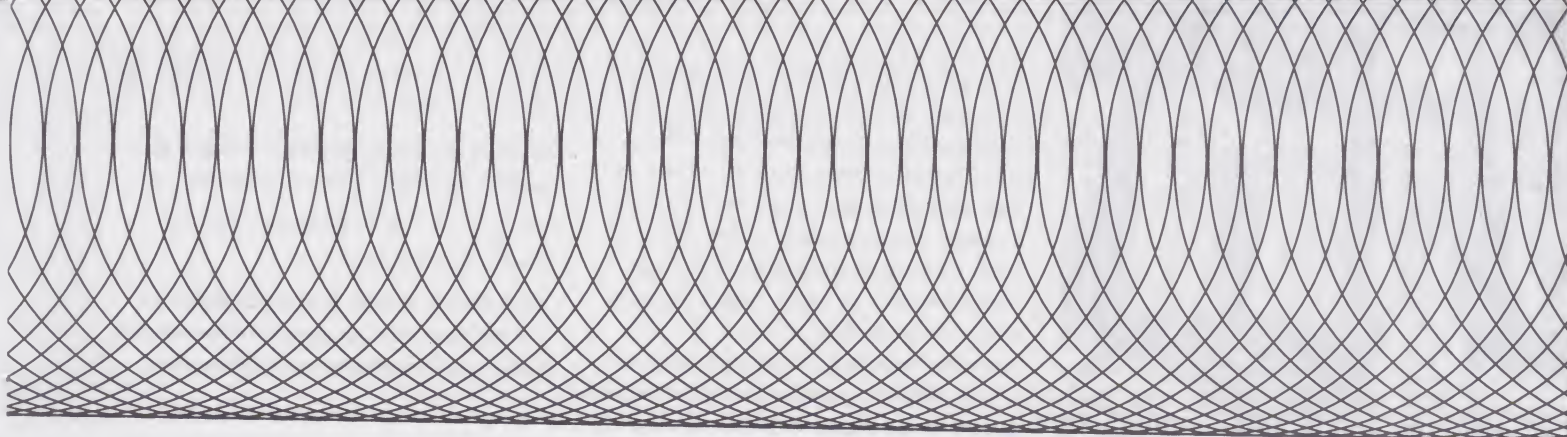
When you first started, who did you go to? Who did you take your cues from?

When I first started, Dan Koretsky from Drag City was a good friend of mine. He was always extremely helpful and nice. Who else? Corey at Touch 'n' Go, the Simple Machines girls, Teenbeat—pretty much anyone. I called people I didn't even know. So when people call me and ask me the same things, I always try and do what I can to help people—

to pass on the knowledge. ¶ Obviously, to start a label you have to have some capital together. I did my first two CDs through Caroline Records—they manufactured and distributed them but I didn't have a very good experience with them. But they taught me a lot about initial stages—production. ¶ I took some of my cues from Dischord and Touch 'n' Go—they have a 50/50 profit split and the artists are involved with every single decision. If they so choose, they can even decide how their ads look. The artists have control and input every step of the way and aren't restricted except, you know, financially. But even that's good because finally when the record starts to sell they can see some royalties off it—that's what I like to have happen as well.

The first bands you started working with—were they friends of yours? How did you find them?

Gaunt, I met at their show. They tried to sell me a T-shirt or something and I bought their singles and we just sort of kept in touch. Gorilla, I didn't know—it's kind of a combination. Obviously, some people I knew. The first record where a lot of people started to pay attention was Freakwater and I knew them from Eleventh Dream Day. That's how I also started putting out the Tortoise 7"s. I knew Doug—they were all close friends of mine. Now, bands I work with bring in their other projects or turn us on to things they like. Someone like Oval was just someone whose import CD I bought and then sent them a fan fax saying, "I'm obsessed with your CD. More people need to hear this." I offered up a press list, I offered to send them to people for free. I ended up releasing his stuff. A Minor Forest I saw while I was bar-



tending at the Empty Bottle and I went to see them at the fireside and then we ended up keeping in touch and now we've done two records with them.

Lets get back to the timeline—when did you move to Chicago?

Three and half years ago.

Why Chicago?

I was keeping apartments in Brooklyn and Chicago and I was manufacturing all my records on my own. Freakwater and Gaunt and Tortoise had all started to sell and I was having problems keeping my records in print and still print new stuff. So I knew I needed a distributor to step in and Touch 'n' Go was really the only one I wanted. I knew moving here would make it so I had a better chance of getting them, so I did. And it helped. Plus, it seemed like everyone that I worked with was from here anyway. So, it was an easy move. I got a job bartending at the Rainbo, and at the Empty Bottle and working the counter at Ajax Records.

All at the same time?

Yeah, I bartended and then worked weekends at Ajax.

When did the label turn into a full-time thing?

I was bartending at night, so I had all day free to work, so even at that point it was pretty much full time. When I moved here, I moved into a place that was only \$140 a month, so that freed up some income and made it easier to do everything,

Do you have any goals with the label, other than putting out records you like?

I think my bands are not only good, but they are doing something different and making an

impact on people. Take Freakwater—they may be influenced by these older country records, but the contemporary perspective they bring is really unique in my mind. Or the Nerves—rock'n roll is nothing new, but I think they do it really well. There's no Thrill Jockey aesthetic other than my tastes as a fan. As my tastes change, so does Thrill Jockey. Plus I am no longer the only one that works here. Now everyone brings things to my attention.

I can't really think of any other labels, other than Simple Machines that are female run...

Frontier is. Lisa did it first, as far as I know. She's been going for 15 years. Tommy Boy. Villa Villa Kulla—Tinuviel—she's trying to do a distinctly female oriented label too, which isn't what I'm into, but I certainly support that. I have never really encountered problems because I'm a woman other than that when people call here they think I'm the receptionist. ¶ I find more that people—people doing press stuff especially, think indie labels are a lesser sort of label.

Somehow because you're independently distributed, you are not as valid as if you were through one of the major channels. The thing is is that independent distribution can sell a whole lot of records. People don't seem to understand that. Some of my records, as well as some Drag City records and some Touch n' Go records—all of which are distributed through Touch 'n' Go—have sold extraordinarily well. I've had more problems with people dealing with me like that than problems because I am a woman. People feel like they need to tell you how the biz is, or how things should work. Maybe they lump you in as some sort of "indie label," when really, all it is is a distribution

choice. I don't know what the hell "indie rock" or "post-rock" is, but I know I don't put it out. I'm an independently distributed label that puts out many different types of music and that's that.

I also imagine that critics, particularly on the success of Tortoise, have started to label you or try and confine or define Thrill Jockey as a "post-rock label," when in reality it's hard to find a blanket definition that even covers half your artists.

And while I may not agree with that, I do have to appreciate the exposure those writers are giving my bands. It's a double edged sword. When I say I don't know what "indie rock" is, I don't want to seem like I am too uptight about it, that's just the way people talk about indie labels—whether it's distributors, or chains or larger magazines—they equate being independent with being incompetent. ¶ Our biggest challenge is that every band and every record is so different, that we really have to be flexible because everything changes band-to-band. We have to try and find as many ways to sell and promote and let people know about the Nerves, which is rock 'n' roll, but then we also have to do the same thing for the Duo which is simply cornet and percussion. Because everyone who works here has to do a lot of different things, they always have to be thinking about other ways they can do them or apply that knowledge. ¶ As certain bands grow, all of a sudden new challenges pop up. We then have to figure out how to get them into a Barnes and Noble or something. It's a lot of work. It is a lot of work and it will always be a lot of work, but the bands and the people that I get to work with, they make it all worth it. ©



Music is just one part of my politics.

I don't make my money doing music.

I have my own plumbing business.

Starting out in the San Diego suburb of Chula Vista in the mid-nineteen eighties, Vinyl Communications is one of the longest running West Coast independent labels that still puts out vital, fresh and interesting new music. VC's totally eclectic catalogue speaks for itself. Spanning nearly every conceivable genre, from political crank callers such as Brother Russell, electronic artists such as Kid 606 and Lesser, to noise bands like The Haters, VC has consistently redefined the artistic boundaries of what is considered punk. Punk Planet got a chance to yack with VC founder and Tit Wrench frontperson Bob Beyerle in January. The following conversation is what transpired. Interview by Joel Schalit

I first found out about VC in college when I bought a Cringer LP that you put out. I think it was a compilation called *No Tikki Tembo No Sa Rembo*. Over the years I've run across VC a number of times, most recently when I heard the new Pansy Division record *Absurd Pop Romance*, where they placed that Brother Russell call "Gay Day," at track zero. It's been neat to see how much the label has changed over the years. Brother Russell is a big jump from Cringer.

When I talk to people about this topic I tell them that VC has stayed the same by changing. I think that a lot of people who've stayed punk have changed. The bottom line is that we've stayed the same by transforming, whereas other people have changed by staying the same. Let's face it: it isn't 1985 anymore. It's not even 1990 either. A lot of what goes on in the punk world reminds me of when I was in high school, where people dug bands like the Grateful Dead. I thought it was old news then, although it was still popular. That's what I think punk is. Punk ought to be about doing new things. Technology has gotten to the point where it allows us to bring a lot of new stuff in.

What do you mean by that?

I'm not super technology driven because I don't want to be one of those folks for whom technology constitutes the entirety of their creative energy. In a sense, I'm more about folk music. But folk music nowadays includes having the possibility of composing music on a computer. That creates a lot more artistic options, because I've always been more concerned with music's content than I have been with form. For example, there's no reason you can't have spoken word, a folk song,

some raging techno number and a punk tune all on one album.

Which is one way to describe the content of some of your band Tit Wrench's records.

Yeah, exactly. Men's Recovery Project is exactly the same way.

Their *Frank Talk About Humans EP* which you put out a few years ago seems to epitomize the kind of punk eclecticism you're talking about.

Men's Recovery Project are one of my favorite bands. They're definitely doing that right now. Their live shows are more geared to traditional punk crowds, but MRP are really energetic. The last time I saw them, I encouraged them to use more electronics live, like they use on their records.

It's kind of hard to pull that same electronic studio vibe off live.

Yeah, I've been trying to do that for years.

How does Tit Wrench put its live shows together?

We've always experimented a lot in live settings. Some shows, there was just Matt from Gravity on guitar, me, and a backing tape. Other gigs we've done as a full band, sometimes with three keyboardists. Other times we've played with eight folks on stage. Other shows we've done, the drummer was playing using midi triggers, where our kick drum was a toilet. We've also used tit wrenches, which are plumbing tools.

So that's where that name comes from?

Sort of. It's kind of an abstract name. Being working class and growing up in that environment, to me the tit wrench represents the ruling class sucking on the tit of the working class—feeding at the breast of the people who literally create wealth. ¶ There's so many people who don't produce any wealth, that don't work. They don't do anything, but they're the ones making millions off of business deals. ¶ The tit wrench was wrenching those people off of the so-called tit. The tit wrench is supposed to symbolize getting the wealthy off of our "tit," in order to allow working people to control what it is they create. That's why Vinyl Communications has stayed independent. That's why I do it, in order to communicate those ideas.

Your politics aren't just limited to your label and the music you put out. I seem to recall that you ran for mayor of the town you live in, Chula Vista.

Yeah, in 1991. That was a lot of fun. It inspired another punk kid in town to run too! Most of that election stuff has been documented. *Maximum Rock and Roll* even did an article on it.

Are you ever planning on doing more local political activity like that again?

I'm not ruling it out. Right now the label is my main focus. It's been really busy. My main focus is staying afloat financially. In another couple of years, a run for office isn't out of question. If anything, it's a good way to get different opinions into the newspaper that normally wouldn't be there. I would certainly encourage anyone to run. There's different ways to do it too. You can just get your name on the ballot—all you have to do is get your ballot statement in, and you can say whatever the fuck you want. It costs a couple of hundred bucks, but it's totally worth it because it gets into the sample ballots of everyone in your district. Or you can really take it seriously and go to all the platforms, which is what I did. ¶ I'm not a good public speaker though. That was my biggest weakness. But I had a few people who liked what I had to say. The guy that did win the race liked the ideas I had to offer. In fact, I even got on the city's economic development commission. But I got off of it pretty quickly because most of the people on it were just representing companies and they were being paid to be there. They weren't on the city's salary mind you, they were on the salary of whatever company they worked for. I was taking work off, barely making ends meet in order to be there.

How would you describe your politics? You sound fairly Marxist. That sickle and hammer you use in the Vinyl Communications logo sort of suggests as much, even though it does strike me as being slightly ironic.

I'm kind of a weird amalgamation of leftist concerns. My politics can't be painted into any one particular corner. I'm more of a working class oriented Communist type, with a hell of a lot of Anarchist tendencies, all mixed together in an American way.

What do you mean, "In an American way?"

I think the constitution is good because I think it's important to take our own democratic traditions seriously. But there are too many distractions. Economically speaking, the system in this country is so unfair. It

favours the elite and the ruling class. If there was some way that people could seriously take the system at its word, it wouldn't be that bad. That's one of the reasons I ran for office. Music is just one part of my politics. I don't make my money doing music, I have my own plumbing business. But I hesitate to even call that a business. It's just me. I don't make any money off of other people's labor, just my own.

How do you feel about the politics of the way most labels are run these days?

Most record labels are generally run like run of the mill businesses. That's one of the reasons why I'm so down on major labels. I've always felt that musicians should start their own labels. That's how this label got started. It's important to know that I wasn't trying to start a business. I just wanted to provide an outlet for our work. I get disappointed sometimes when bands who are thinking of working with us end up going elsewhere because they don't want to do the work. They don't want to promote their records themselves, or talk on the phone to radio stations. They'd rather have other people do it for them. The tragedy is that ninety-nine times out of a hundred, bands who have such expectations end up getting fucked. In a sense I wear my politics on my sleeve. In terms of the label, it gets expressed in the cooperative effort that is Vinyl Communications. I still very much believe in doing it yourself to the utmost degree. In that sense, Vinyl Communications is my politics.

The eclectic character of what you put out on your label is also a reflection of your democratic, do it yourself politics too, if only because the ethos that it represents is so inclusive.

That's not necessarily intentional. It's also a reflection of my personality. To me it's more important that these people have their say. That's more important than me agreeing with what it is they're actually saying. In a sense, that's our distributor Mordam's philosophy too. We couldn't do what we're doing without their help. I know that they wish they could help us more, but we're really happy with them. They help us out tremendously. ¶ The other thing worth mentioning is that we all go through different political stages in our lives. When you're eighteen or nineteen, you see the world one way. Ten years later, you may be looking in the same political direction, but just because people disagree

with you doesn't mean you feel like they're totally fucked.

How old were you when you started Vinyl Communications?

When I was twenty, back in 1985-86.

So you must be one of San Diego's oldest indie labels.

Yes, we're San Diego's oldest, not to mention finest. Catalogue number 167 is going to be our next release.

That's a lot of records to have put out. Thirty is usually the litmus test.

I don't want to suggest that all of our releases are successful. If I lived in someone's rented closet, I'm sure I could make a living at this. But I do need to eat periodically. But I love it, even though it gets hard to pay the bills sometimes.

One of the most interesting things about VC is the fact that you still operate within a traditionally "punk" business community, for example, Mordam, and yet you put out a lot of stereotypically "unpunk" electronic releases, particularly the new electronic punk, like ORI and neo-digital hardcore artists like Kid 606.

To be honest with you, the kind of artists I work with is dependent on the kind of personalities involved, not necessarily the kind of music they make. Granted, the music is important to me, but the people come first.

But you can't deny that the vast majority of releases aren't traditionally punk sounding.

What do you think electronica and noise's relationship to punk is? Obviously there's a connection given the fact that you put out records that touch on both genres.

When I first heard punk, it was something that sounded so different. It was new. That was cool enough. Punk bands were saying what I was thinking. I think a lot of electronic and noise music has that potential. To be real honest, I'm not that impressed with a lot of electronic music because a lot of artists use it to disguise the fact that they have no talent, and not much to say. But I think potentially it's one more tool that can be used to say something important. ☺



today



is the day

Eight years ago, Steve Austin began *Today is the Day* as a spiritual and sonic instrument of power and mysticism, exploring the potential for strength and tragedy with falsehood sheared away. With a sound as blinding and violent as an execution-style killing in midday traffic, *Today is the Day* has secured a signature voice against the tide of imposters and lightweights currently inhabiting the realm of heavier music. Marrying psychedelic technical metal and extreme noise with dark ambient soundscapes, acoustic flights, and contemporary movie and television samples, *Today is the Day* has acted as a unique touchstone for much of hardcore's newer faces. Interview by **Patrick Kennedy**

It seems like a lot of people dismiss *Today is the Day* or they regard you from a safe distance because it defies all proper categories. It's "too creepy, too involved, depressing, frightening, satanic" and so on. Sometimes what the band is saying is cryptic and elusive, and at others it's as plain as stone. But what I take away, and what I think is the essence of the band, is the crystallization of certain human truths.

Right, people just often freak out on things that are said really straight. It's hard to run away from a phrase like, "What are you made of?" because it gets inside and has to do with the person who is listening. I'm really into the notion of "Forget everything you know"—all this programming and all this shit the world teaches you. So much of that is L. Ron Hubbard Dianetics, reactive mind type of shit, like that's the natural way you think of things. The world needs to "forget everything." ¶ As far as people who try to do something different, they're either taken too fucking earnestly and sincerely or they're taken too outrageously and wackily and the whole point ends up being missed. It's not about how fucking crazy and outlandish you can be or all the crazy things you can say, it's about trying to tie them together to real human existence to prove a point. People do things—things that you wouldn't even imagine—that go against all convention. There are no rules on this planet, yet most people's

lives are charted the day they are born and they don't even realize it. This world is a temporary thing and there are systems in place here to keep the planet running. ¶ Most entertainment—whether it's music, movies or books—has big money and big corporations behind it. Its all been censored and filtered out. You're not getting reality on the screen or on an album. Not only that, you're not getting imaginative stuff out there, because if it's imaginative or psychotic, it's against the rules. ¶ Not to go off on another thing, but a good example is back in the 1400s Nostradamus lived in this place in south France, and there were all these books—the books of the various religions in their original form. There were very few existing copies. Knowledge was a super-safeguarded thing because of the governments in place at the time. All of that information, be it true or false, was so scary to the government, that they were willing to kill anyone who had it. These weren't even books about building bombs, they were about personal salvation and strength. It's awfully ironic that things that might make an individual want to take a stand and do things on their own have never been popularized in this world.

Were you raised a Christian?

I totally was. My parents were more like dysfunctionally religious. They tried the Catholic church and didn't dig it, then went to something else. We ended up going to the strictest kind, which is Southern Baptist. In that Church I basically saw the guy who ran it get kicked out for having sex with all these dudes. I've been around strange religious things ever since I was five years old. I went to churches that were in motor homes or basements where they had snake ceremonies. I was healed at 6 years old—a preacher put his hand on my forehead. I had that whole experience all the way until I got up into high school. Religion is like a big, false insurance plan; a belief that everything is going to be all right. ¶ Today, well, I am looking across from me now at a two foot crucifix with Jesus with his legs broken off mounted upside

down on my wall. It's the first thing you see when you walk into our apartment. People come in and think, "What does this mean? Are these people total Satanists?" But what it really means is that we are totally open-minded and into self-belief. We are not afraid to have various symbols on our wall. I love the upside down cross, and I love the pentagram and the eye in the pyramid. I'm into all forms of religious imagery. Whether it's good or bad to someone else, it all equals the same thing to me. I'm into the idea of no religion. The best case is to be born and have straightforward parents who tell you, "Look, you've got, say, 70 years. You'd better rock on every one of them."

But there is no way to deny that some of the most fervent and intense artists are those who were raised in a pious manner and who have disavowed such things. Look at Nietzsche: he was studying to be a Lutheran minister, and he goes on to write these tremendous, idol-smashing books like *The Anti-Christ*.

A marked turning point for me, the final blow with religion, was my dad dying in 1996. He had just been, ironically, saved. When I was at the funeral home, this guy was looking at me—I thought he was an insurance salesman or car dealer—but he goes on to tell me he was the pastor of this church and that my father had given his soul to Jesus before death, so we had nothing to worry about, blah blah. ¶ The next day during the actual ceremony, he got up and talked about my dad in first person about his life and I was thinking, "You are such an incredibly stupid fuck." He didn't know my dad whatsoever and he sure as hell didn't know him spiritually. The idea of trying to console me and my family with god and whatnot was bullshit. I just said to myself, "Anything I can do to fuck this up until the day I die, I will." Any abomination I can do to Christianity, I will do. ¶ At the end of the death ceremony, I played "Your Cheating Heart" by Hank Williams Sr. over the PA of the funeral home because that was some honest to goodness reality. I was saying, "This man was my

The best case is to be born and have straightforward parents who tell you, "Look, you've

friend, he loved Hank Williams Sr. and I do too, and this is my way of saying good-bye to him." I didn't need any bullshit about where he was going.

Those are defining moments in peoples lives, where things converge and you realize your path. I was raised with the same belief system, and finally it dawned on me that if there is no god, anything is possible—which I had no idea was a verbatim statement by Dostoyevsky. That was the moment everything turned against itself. An idea so fucking simple....

.....could be a complete and utter change in the way you do things, down to the way you write words or music. If you sit down to do something with that mindset, you can fuck-ing go anywhere. When you realize that one simple key in life, you can be a completely different type of person.

Author Don DeLillo claims that the artist—whether writer, painter or musician—as a cultural and social force is dead. He says that the artist has been absorbed completely by culture itself, and that only acts of terror stand beyond such absorption. In other words, he's saying that the terrorist has replaced the artist as representing and affecting true danger and change. What's your take on that idea?

Well, terror makes people change their minds one way or another. Terror cannot be made into a commercial or an after-school special and cannot be bought and sold. Attempts have been made, but not with terror as the victor. It cannot be made attractive or appealing. It gets back to the point of danger in rock and roll. Back in the '50s, '60s and '70s, you had people like Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis or Iggy Pop and onward. They were considered dangerous. Now you have bullshit like Marilyn Manson, who stage their own protest rallies. ¶ Being on tour with *Today is the Day*, I have been able to visit spots of the worst acts of terrorism in the United States. I have collected artifacts—girders from the Oklahoma bombing, coloring book pages from the same place. We went to the towers that were bombed in NYC. We went to Waco.

With the Millenium approaching and the encroachment of modern technology, you have these two operative poles: Folks who champion technological advancement, and folks like Ted Kaczinski, the Unabomber, who was a brilliant mathematician and had this break with the quantitative sciences and moved off into the wilderness.

Me and my wife joke all the time about becoming total separatists. Who wouldn't wanna be? You are off in your own world and you don't have to deal with the pig on the corner.

But that's almost essentially what you are doing with *Today is the Day*. You are touring, recording everything, writing everything, you're doing your own thing. You're not punching a clock on someone else's time.

Yeah, we don't need shit from anyone—we do our own thing. ¶ The guy who is doing the artwork for our next album is this legendary tattoo artist, Paul Booth. He doesn't hang out with people—he is into his own world and his own trip. I am very proud to be working with him on this new album. He's creating a cover that is all about "forget everything you know, this is freedom, power and violence."

So where is the music heading?

The new *Today is the Day* album will definitely be a far different experience than any of the previous ones. It's an extension of *Temple of the Morning Star* in the sense of its heaviness and the tuning, and the songs are still basically two minute long bursts of insanity. But it's a longer album, 21 songs all with drums, bass, guitar, vocals and samples. It's the most driving music we have ever made.

How do you put an album together? Does a general theme for an album germinate first and then you work from the top down, or is it like most bands, just collecting songs and then building from that?

I almost do the entire album backwards. I go ahead and get the concept, including the title and the artwork, done way ahead of time. For

this album, it was already entitled *In The Eyes Of God*, and the songs have something to do with that theme. It's basically all about one man's struggle to live in this world, fighting against everything that wants to stop him and his family. I had the titles long before I even wrote the songs.

In the years after *Supernova* was put out, a lot of young bands have attempted to copy the musical ideas you introduced. Today is the Day has spawned some sort of "post-hardcore" movement—bands like Coalesce, Converge, Deadguy, Dillinger Escape Plan. They are skilled technical musicians, but often I find that the assumption is made that heaviness is purely a matter of volume, turning up all the way, when it's dynamics that make music heavy.

People get the idea that its just, "Blow em away bam bam bam!" But if I punch someone in the face 10 times, they're only gonna realize that the first hit was hard. After a few, it's just not there. Heavy needs some sort of dynamic flow. It's way more akin to the dynamics of a true human personality. Though I can be fueled and can get fucked off and destroy someone or a room, I also like to lay down and take my shoes off and relax. The music that we play is a more accurate depiction of true human life.

It's a more organic approach. Other bands don't seem to get that point.

They think the whole trip of it is just screaming and distortion. They miss the point. It's all about what you are actually playing and what you are actually saying. Most people are just so wrapped up in their own trip that they are freaked out about saying anything that has to do with their own faults, cracks or indiscretions. It's like if you are gonna tell a guy a story, do you wanna tell him some bullshit or something ineffective, or do you wanna give him details of a moving, honest experience? ☺

got, say, 70 years. You'd better rock on every one of them."



B L U

E

T I P



JASON FARRELL, voice and guitar for Washington D.C. based monsters of rock Bluetip and all-around creative output machine, was kind enough to field a few of my questions about art, being busy, and etching your name in history. The following is the documentation of said questioning. Bluetip have just released their second record on Dischord, *Join Us*, and let me tell ya girlfriend, you better cinch your belt tight, cuz it'll knock you right out of your pants. Interview by **Josh Hooten**

You're something of a renaissance man with graphic design, illustration, filmmaking and of course playing music in two bands as well as solo. Is the impulse to work in each of these mediums the same or are they completely independent of each other? I'm curious about how you decide which ideas are going to be a song and which are going to be a film or an illustration or something else.

An impulse could end up in any number of mediums, but most ideas exist only in the context of one medium, as a response to that impulse. I'll think how cool it might be to see some type treatment for a record cover and, well, that doesn't sound like a good movie. It's like the idea and medium show up at the same time—or at least clearly labeled. Things will flow and maybe after I've figured out a song, it may lead me into a movie scene idea; or a layout will make me think about a movie title sequence. Each idea is tied to its medium, but maybe becomes the impulse for the next idea. I don't think I've ever had to delegate mediums to be paired up with concepts.

Do these interests ever conflict? I know they compliment each other in the sense that you design your own records and so forth, but do they ever get in the way of each other? How do you divide up your time between them?

I used to think I was doing so many things at once: making furniture, playing in a band, calling myself a filmmaker. But then I realized I don't ever finish anything. I'd be sitting in my room on a sunny day freaking out over what the fuck I should do—not because I was bored but because I couldn't remember half the things I started. Cleaning my room is a nightmare. It's picking up pieces of paper with random sketches of ideas I wrote down and forgot that then flood back in with this new urgency. I'll move a box and see the theremin case I started to build two years ago but got side tracked by some other forgotten

half-started what-the-fuck. It's very frustrating. I start berating myself for being lazy and ineffectual. I have a pity party in my dirty room. That gets pretty annoying, so I've been trying to figure out the process from idea to partial completion to full-on frustration. ¶ I used to skate every day—I got pretty good. I focused all my time and effort and thought to skating. When I started playing in Swiz, the focus shifted considerably and my whole life was that band. Skating slipped a bit and school was pretty half-assed. Swiz broke up and I decided to finish up school and get the fuck out of college. I chose graphic arts as a major since I had done a few Swiz covers, so the next four years were all about graphic art. Then I fucked around with films—starting many, finishing a few... well, two—and I started Bluetip. That band has kept me up all night since. The whole time, I'd be dabbling in a mess of other stuff that never got finished, but those were the main focuses. ¶ We started Bluetip as a way to collect all the things we do into one entity. Music, writing, film, graphic art, anything and everything would go towards and be associated with Bluetip. It was a lofty idea that has only partially been realized at this point. All these activities demand massive amounts of time to be done well—time I don't have. So yeah, there are serious conflicts and stuff gets shelved and reshelfed until I remember them again. Sweetbelly Freakdown blossomed while Bluetip was between drummers and now can't function to a full band capacity because all the members have bigger things soaking up the limited amount of juice they may have. ¶ You can't do everything at the same time, there are limits. It took me this long to figure that out. So now I'm trying to learn how to be patient and thorough. Or at least how to stay awake for longer periods of time, or maybe slow down the days.

What do you suck at? What have you tried that you're absolutely terrible at?

For a while there it seemed like everyone in DC wanted to look like a mechanic. I loved old cars and engines and motorcycles and all that shit so I got gas station jackets, drew pictures of cars I'd love to build someday. I got this old Cadillac limousine that I fell in love with when I first saw it. I justified buying it to myself and to others by saying I'd save money and do the repairs myself. It's been sitting beside my house for the last two years. I got a free motorcycle from this guy, rode it 'til it

broke and stuck it in the garage with the other three motorcycles I rode to death. Every now and again, I'll clean the carburetors or paint the tank, maybe buy a new battery in a futile attempt to get them running. At best, I get them back to their original state of "broken" and remember why I put them away in the first place. I never took care of them anyway, I treated them like shit. I wanted so badly to be able to solve my own car problems, but I can't fix a goddamn thing.

You've been doing your thing for a long time now. How would you compare the independent music scene now to when you were first getting involved in it?

I remember how much I used to love the Faith; how good Minor Threat songs were for skating; how proud you'd feel being involved in something with your friends that was exclusive and separate from what the rest of the world seemed to be doing. It's very exciting when you first realize how expansive a sub-culture is; when you start to recognize the aesthetic, get a taste for the music, discover it's going on in your town right now. It's like looking at your Halloween candy for the first time spread out on the floor. Shows then seemed so mammoth and eventful like we'd stumbled wide-eyed into the coolest rooms in the world. It turns out we had come in at a time when DC Hardcore had swelled well beyond its banks with tons of fucked up shit forcing its originators to get the fuck out and start over. We didn't know this then, we only knew how fun stagediving was. The same shows I recall dreamily are recalled with revulsion by others. To us it was new and exciting while to others it was old and left to die. ¶ I wonder how much anything actually changes. Maybe the scene is how you perceive it. Some like it and some hate it; some benefit and others get envious. There are new people getting into independent music now who are probably feeling some of the same excitement I felt years ago, while someone else feels surrounded by a bunch of kids in costumes buzzed up on shitty candy.

How would you say your involvement with this music scene influences your life outside of this context—some people call it "the real world." How has your involvement shaped you into the person you are today, and how you take these tendencies and behaviors outside of the scene?

The scene is at least partially responsible for my diminished hearing, which affects com-

munication with non-scene civilians. I think the scene hints towards instilling its members with a sense of higher ideals, enlightenment, separation from and superiority over the "real world". That sounds like college. Don't sell the townies short. ¶ I don't really separate out my life between the scene and the real world. Bluetip pretty much takes over most of my life anyway, dictating my work schedule and standard of living.

Independent music hasn't come between me and my family, so Thanksgiving isn't awkward. I don't know how much the scene has affected me, I can't separate it out from what I may have picked up elsewhere.

Do you ever consider your legacy? As a creative person, do you ever think about the art you are leaving behind?

Great question. Yeah, I've thought about that. I'd love to have people drop my name 500 years after I'm dead, like Vasco De Gama or Magellan. I wish I could hear the pronunciations. I wonder what kinda crazy accents they would have or how they would butcher my name. I can't help but secretly laugh when someone is talking all smart and they mention Camus like he's their confidant, pronouncing it in their faux-French accent as "Camoo." ¶ I figure the only way to live on is through someone else remembering you. I wish the stuff I do was good enough to merit recognition after I'm dead. Maybe some people will think it is. People seem to like old dead movie stars on posters. My favorite band broke up before I knew they existed. ¶ When I got my motorcycle license they asked me if I'd be an organ donor. I started thinking about dying and organs and if your brain keeps going for a bit after you die—your thoughts fading slowly like the smeared back end of a lightning bug. I decided I definitely wanted to donate any and all of my organs to a needy recipient, but for the slightly selfish reasons of it being a form of living on. I don't want to be used for science and I don't want my skeleton in a suitcase for doctors to study. I want a casket and a tombstone and a full skeleton. I want physical evidence of my existence. Skeletal Legacy. ©



I FIGURE THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE ON IS THROUGH SOMEONE ELSE REMEMBERING YOU. I WISH THE STUFF I DO WAS GOOD ENOUGH TO MERIT RECOGNITION AFTER I'M DEAD. MAYBE SOME PEOPLE WILL THINK IT IS.

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE ZINE INFILTRATION

1. How long have you been doing your zine and what issue are you on? *Infiltration* #1 came out in September 1996. I'm now working on lucky #12.

2. How long do you plan on doing it for? Forever, ideally. I'll never run out of places to write about.

3. What would cause you to quit? A few things, I suppose. If a judge threatened to imprison me. If I learned that something I wrote caused a cute woodsy animal to suffer. If I developed a serious drug habit and lost my can-do spirit. Or if I became pure light and energy. Hopefully, none of these things will come to pass.

4. How do you distribute your zine? Primarily through a few larger distributors (most notably Tower), a few mailorder places, a few zine-selling bookstores and a few local record stores. I also sell fair numbers at zine and small press shows and send out another large chunk through the mail in response to both orders and trades.

5. Why is your zine called what it's called? It's called *Infiltration* because, you know, it sounds cool. It's a pretty straightforward name—no subtle allusions to Homer's *Iliad* or anything. It's subtitled "the zine about going places you're not supposed to go" so people don't think it's about chemicals leeching through soil.

6. In order of importance, what would you rank as the three main subjects you cover? The zine is almost exclusively about how to get inside interesting off-limits places. Other subjects I touch on are the evils of surveillance and the gloriousness of the urban environment.

7. What's the hardest part about doing your zine? Distribution hassles. I don't have a flair for accounting or adminstrivia, so I'm very uncomfortable nagging people to pay consignment bills. And, of course, I hate dealing with dishonest people.

8. What's the most rewarding? Feeling like a welcome part of the zine community. I loved zines before I started *Infiltration* and even made a few, but I never really got thoroughly involved in going to shows, trading, letter writing, reviewing, submitting to other zines, etc., until the last year or two.

9. Are you doing your zine for the free records? God, I hope not, because I've never received any.

10. Was it weird to interview John Glenn on the Mir Space Station after infiltrating it illegally? John and I didn't have a lot in common, but it was the first time in months I'd been able to have a conversation where I didn't have to pretend to speak Russian. He also gave me some good tips on how I could sneak aboard the next unmanned flight to Mars, so that'll make for a fun issue.

11. What was the best and worst interview you've ever done? I've only run four interviews so far, and they've all gone smoothly. I guess the most interesting one was the interview with a security supervisor in #3, because it was fun to get the other side's perspective.

12. Quote your favorite thing ever said in the pages of your zine. In #10 I reprinted a conversation I had with a security guard while he was kicking me out of the train station. The guard told me that his rudeness to me was nothing personal, as he spoke that way to everyone. "Even your best friend?" I asked him. His somber reply: "I don't have a best friend, so that's just too bad."

13. Do you write everything yourself? If so, why? If not, how do you find other writers? I write the majority myself, but I always have a

few pages of letters and I often let someone else step in and write about some fascinating place that they know better than I do. Most of the contributors have contacted me after picking up an issue of *Infiltration* or reading about it in some newspaper or magazine; I've run across a few on the Internet as well.

14. How is your zine produced? With love and tenderness. And a decent computer, scanner and laser printer.

15. Handwritten vs. Typewriter vs. Computer? I'm all digital, personally. I like to re-word things quite a bit, so I find it very difficult to write anything beyond notes on paper. Handwriting is a nice touch for some zines. I don't understand people who prefer typewriters at all.

16. What other zines inspire you? Oh, a bunch. I'm inspired by the writing of great travel zines, like *Travelling Shoes* or Jeff Zenick's zines, and by the audacity of other urban-naughtiness zines like *Samizdat* (the Ann Arbor one), *Il Drains* and *Jinx*. City-centric zines like *Dodge City Journal* or *Brooklyn!* also inspire me. Anything where people show an intense, non-abstract appreciation of the world around them can be inspiring.

17. What is "selling out"? Something punks like to bicker about.

18. If you could live off of your zine, would you? If there was some magical way I could live off *Infiltration* without overcharging or accepting ads, yes. I would also like to be able to turn invisible and force sea creatures to do my bidding.

19. If you had a chance to interview someone who you most likely would never have a chance to talk to, who would it be? Andrei Matsaev. He's a Russian dockworker who recently decided he wanted to join the French Foreign Legion and accordingly stowed away on a ship headed to Scotland, hitched his way from Northern Scotland to Southern England, and then spent three days traveling through the chunnel to France, uninjured and undetected, on a diet of dry coffee grinds and sugar. He was deported back to England by the French and is now in prison in England. I bet he could write a great article for *Infiltration*.

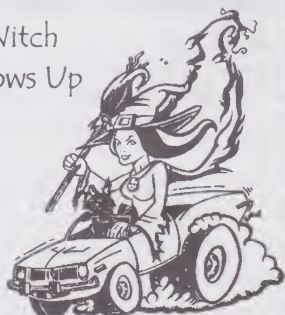
20. Describe your dream interview (who, where, what setting). I'm climbing down inside some storm drains one day, deeper, deeper, deeper still and there at the bottom I find Satan in Hell. We stroll around Hell, talking a little about how Satan and his minions have infiltrated earth society and maybe discussing how to break into Heaven. Sate has this grandmaster key that opens all the doors in Hell, so we get to see all the behind-the-scenes stuff, like the really impressive boiler room and the area where the synthetic pseudo-brimstone walls are molded, while Satan explains all of Hell's security weaknesses. We're exploring some really long-abandoned steam tunnels when suddenly a security guard spots us and gives chase. We out run him and by the time we get back to the main area of Hell, we are totally out of breath from running and laughing so hard. Later we go out for Italian food. It is a lot of fun.

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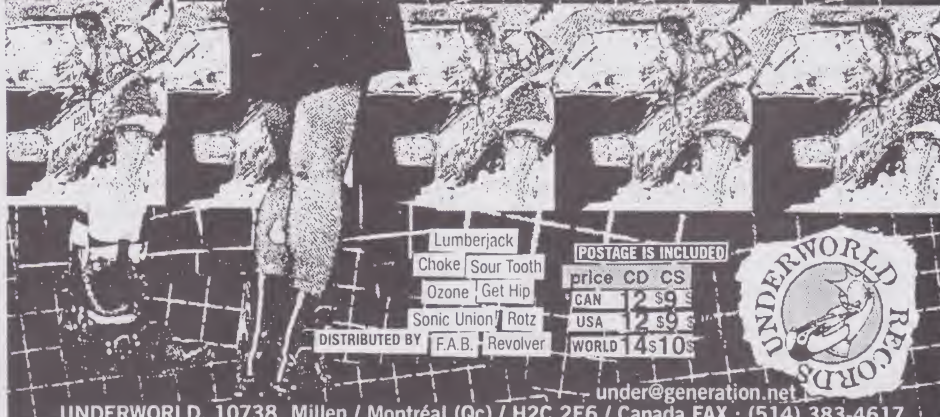
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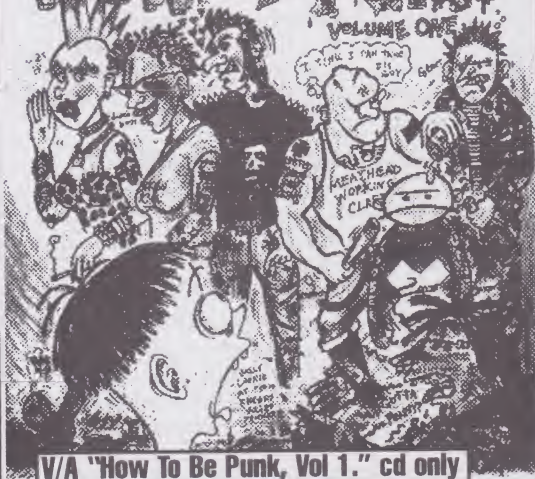


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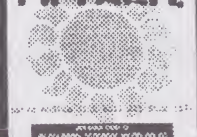
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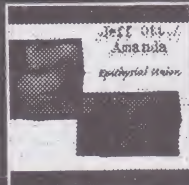
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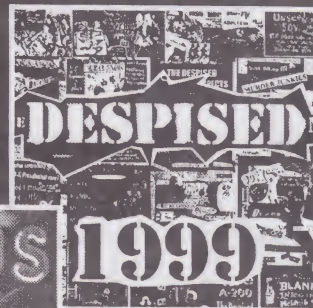
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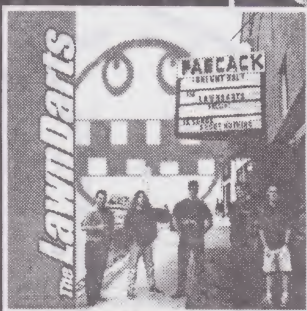


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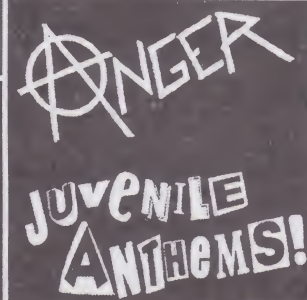
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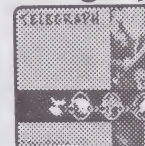
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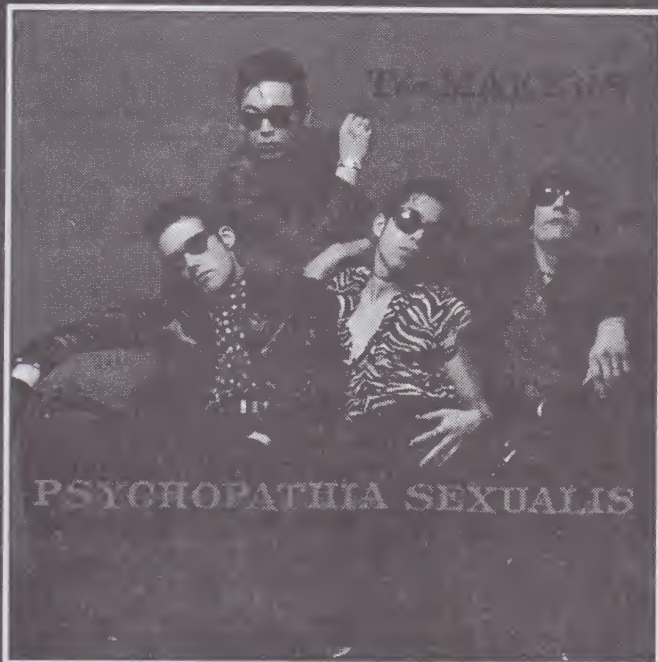


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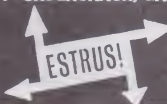
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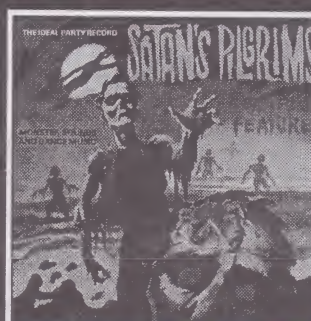
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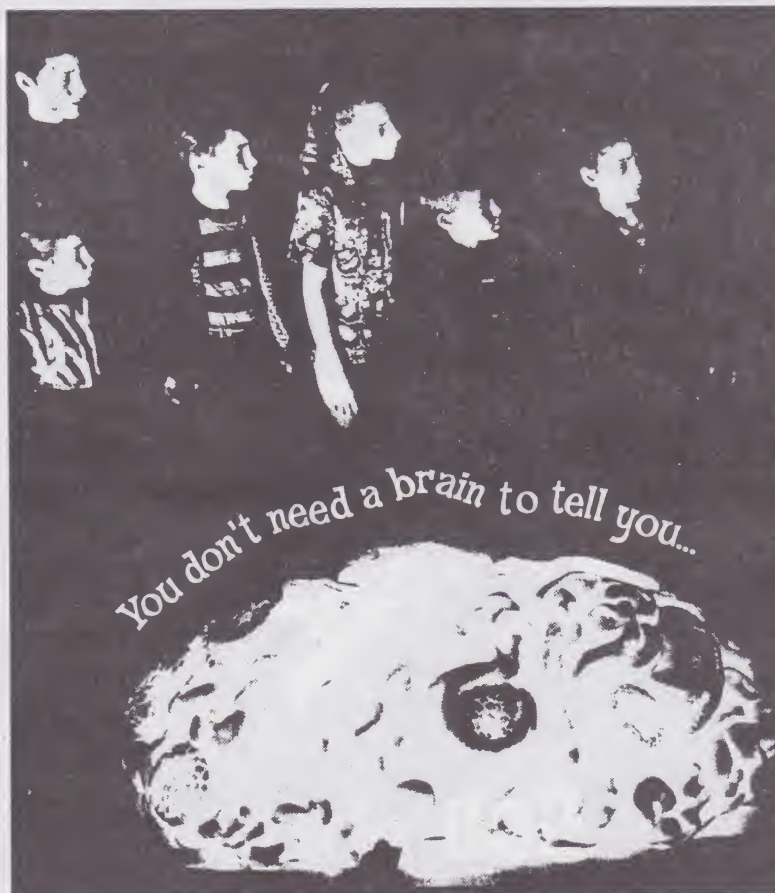
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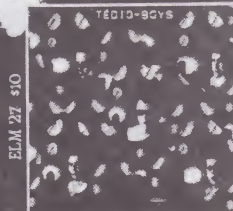


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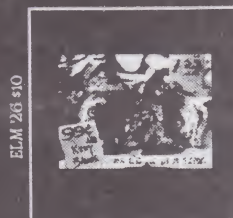
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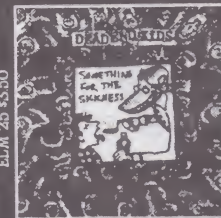
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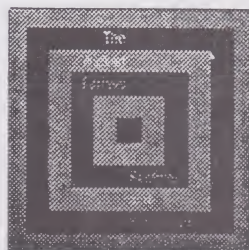
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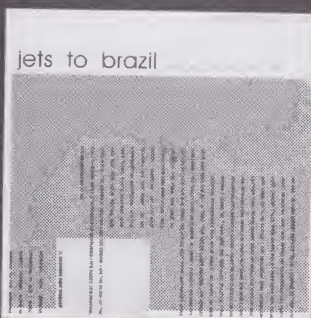
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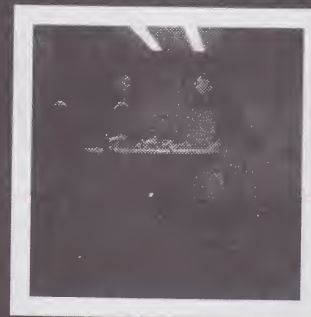
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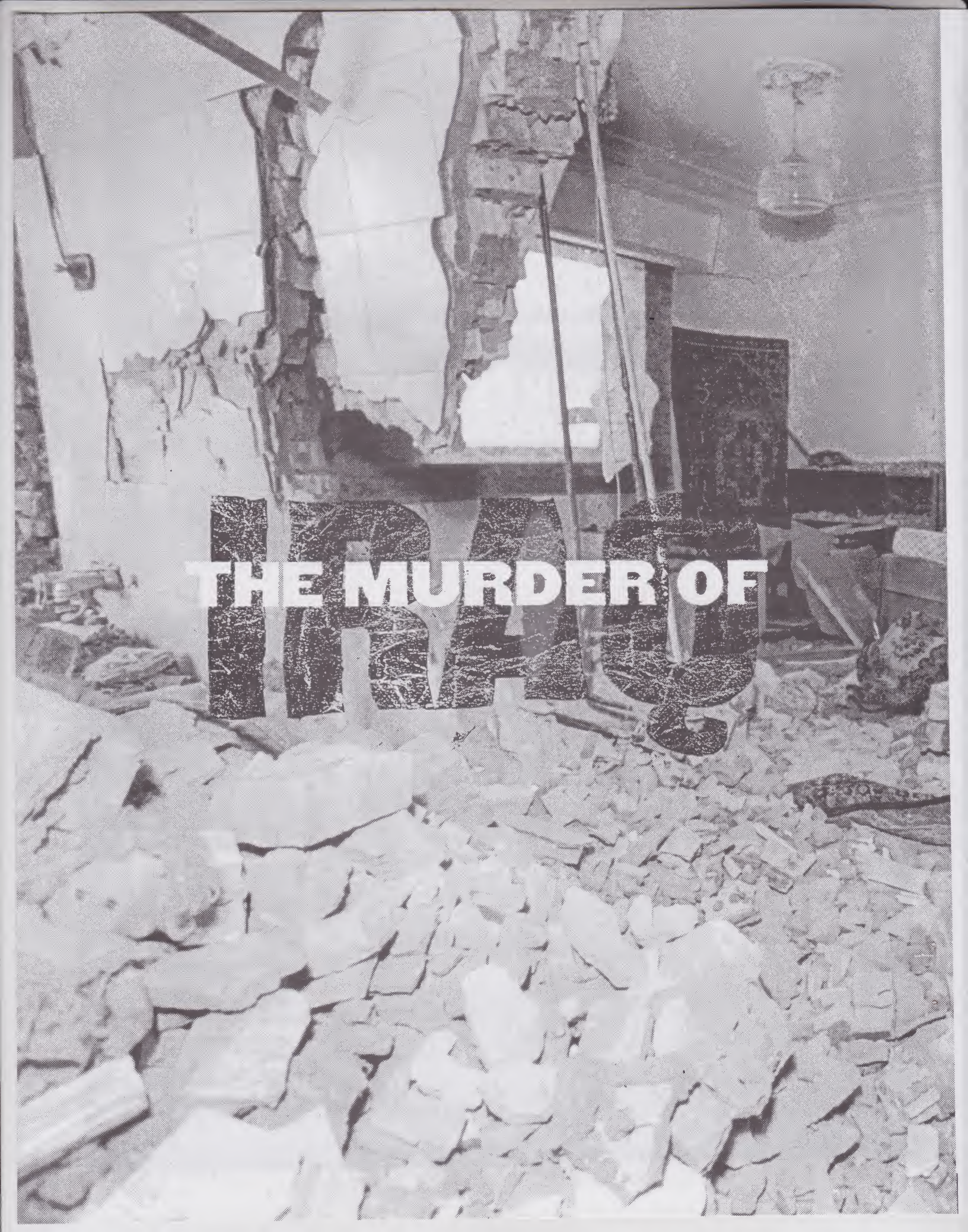
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IRAQ

THE MURDER OF



THE MURDER OF IRAQ

There are moments in time that change you so dramatically that it's only years later you have enough perspective to notice. The Gulf War was one of those moments for me. I was still in high school when then-President Bush waged war on Iraq. The day after bombs dropped, I was in the streets along with thousands of other angry people demanding to know why this murder was happening. We never got a straight answer. We did, however, get plenty of news reports and government propaganda about our "smart" bombs and how we won a "bloodless" war.

December 17th, 1988, when the US again brandished its brutal sword against Iraq, I was deep into production on *Punk Planet* #29. I had been so immersed in the magazine that I hadn't read a newspaper or listened to a news report in days. So it was with much bewilderment when calls started coming in telling me that we were bombing Baghdad. Memories of being a high-school radical rushed over me. I needed to find out what was going on, so I decided to call it a night, even though I knew I'd pay for it the next day. I rushed home and watched the eerie green night-vision camera on CNN for hours.

Later that night, I went out for a beer with an old friend who was in town. Drinking with us was Jeff Guntzel, an ex-roommate of my friend. As we filled each other's glasses with Guinness, talk naturally turned to the savaging of Baghdad that was happening. Jeff explained that he had been to Baghdad in October with the group he worked with, Voices in the Wilderness. Voices, he explained, was a humanitarian organization bent on ending the sanctions against the people of Iraq through education and by actively breaking the sanctions by bringing medicine and supplies to Iraq. He also explained that as thanks for their efforts, the US Justice Department was threatening to fine Voices over \$100,000.

While the Gulf War politicized me, I hadn't paid much attention to what had been going on in Iraq in the years after the war there. I knew there were sanctions still in place, but I had no idea how far-reaching they were and the punishment they brought to the Iraqi people. Jeff's story moved me. By the end of the night, I had decided that I was scrapping the cover story we were working on for this issue and doing a story on the murder of Iraq.

As I began work on the story, I realized how little reporting had been done on the current situation in Iraq. The further I dug, the more it became apparent how important getting word out about it was. The story grew into an interview and a sidebar written by Jeff. Then Voices got me in touch with photographer Alan Pogue, who graciously offered photos for us. Voices then offered documentation of their correspondence with the government. Then *Punk Planet* associate editor Joel Schalit got into the fray with a story about the bombings. At that point, it became apparent that this was much more than a single story, that we were going to have to devote some serious space to this piece. The space was allotted and things just emerged to fill it.

What follows is a collection of writings, photographs and letters. Combined, they are a document (however incomplete) of the brutal murder—a murder happening even as you read this—against the people of Iraq. It is also the story of Voices in the Wilderness, an organization that has ignored US law, tight finances and countless other hurdles not for financial gain or even media exposure, but simply because they have a sense of what is right and what is wrong. It is a story that is moving not only because of the horror it exposes, but also because of the hope—however small—it offers. —Daniel Sinker

Finding My Voice

by Jeff Guntzel

On December 17th, 1998, when Tomahawk missiles began raining down on the people of Iraq, I was on my way to a bank in uptown Chicago to close out the account of Voices in the Wilderness, the organization I work with. Its assets were in danger of being frozen by the United States Department of Justice for breaking federal law for having delivered much needed medicine to the Iraqi people. As I stood in line waiting for a teller to open up, watching CNN footage of missiles exploding on streets I had walked down just eight weeks earlier, I realized how quickly lives change.

...

Six months ago, I was drumming in a punk band and working at a landscaping company in Minneapolis. I was on tour last summer with my band, the Freedom Fighters, when I came across a magazine that had an article about the effects of the economic sanctions in Iraq. I was astounded at the suffering I read about and I wanted to know

more. When we got back from tour, I did some research on the topic and found the Voices in the Wilderness website. What I read was compelling, but again, only raised more questions. I e-mailed Kathy Kelly, the woman who runs the show at Voices. I told her I wanted to meet with her and talk about her experiences in Iraq. She agreed, and invited me down over for a visit.

I knew that by agreeing to bring medicine to the Iraqi people, I could be facing a potentially huge fine and serious jail time. But I realized deep down inside that I felt that the sanctions were truly evil.

When I first arrived at the Voices in the Wilderness headquarters, I didn't know what to expect. I felt nervous, out of my league, and out

Hearing Voices

I got a chance to sit down with Voices in the Wilderness in their Chicago home/office to talk about the history of the organization, the situation in Iraq and the future of both. Interview with Voices in the Wilderness members Michael Bremer (MB) Jeff Guntzel (JG) and Kathy Kelly (KK). Interview by **Daniel Sinker**

What I wanted to talk about first is how Voices got started.

KK: It was 1995 and number of people in the Chicago area had been concerned for a long time about the sanctions against Iraq. But we weren't worried enough to really get together and do something about it. A few of us had been in Iraq during the Gulf War as part of a peace team on the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Others were friends that had either gone to Iraq immediately before or after the war. One of our friends, Chuck Quilty, had driven up from Rock Island and he said, "Look, you folks have been talking about doing something about the sanctions now for years. Either say you're not really going to do it, and I'll go ahead and organize something on my own, or if you're going to do something, let's start now." I think a combined sense of alarm over the rising numbers of deaths that had been recorded in Iraq—especially among chil-

dren—plus a sense of chagrin, prompted us to say, "Okay, let's do something." ¶ Before Chuck left Chicago, we'd hammered together the basic document that started this campaign, which was a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno declaring our intent to go to Iraq in open and public violation of the sanctions and bring medicine and medical supplies. We invited government officials to join us if they wanted to. The idea was to use nonviolent civil disobedience in order to provoke a confrontation with what we felt was an incredibly wrongful and horrible set of rules.

Since it started with a letter to the government stating, "We're going to break the law," I assume that one of the purposes from the outset was to be public about this.

KK: We held a press conference in Chicago on January 15, 1996, which was Martin Luther King's birthday and the eve of what was at that time the fifth year since the Gulf War. At the press conference, we said that the war never ended, that it had just changed into economic warfare, which has been even more brutal and more devastating than the Gulf War was. Economic warfare deliberately targets the most innocent people in all of a society. ¶ On January 22nd, we got a letter back from the US Attorney General,

siphoned through the Treasury Department. It told us that if we persisted with our activities, we risked 12 years in prison, a one million dollar fine and a \$250,000 administrative charge. In response, I plunged into a lot of paperwork in order to let everyone who had initially supported us know that if they wanted to continue with this, that these were the threats we were going to have to deal with. ¶ By March 1996, we had our first delegation ready to go. Just before that, we sent a letter

The idea was to use nonviolent civil disobedience in order to provoke a confrontation with what we felt was an incredibly wrongful and horrible set of rules.

back to the US Attorney General saying, "Thank you for the clarity of your warning. We understood these penalties before we started. We are now on our way with our first delegation."

How many delegations have you sent to Iraq?

KK: Our 19th delegation just returned on December 29th of this past year. We've kept pretty busy. We think it's been a good formu-

of my element. As I climbed the stairs to their second-floor apartment, I couldn't help but think about how far away I was from the indie record stores, basement shows and cramped tour vans I was accustomed to. Little did I know how truly far away I was going to go—or how close I actually was.

Voices in the Wilderness is as punk an operation as anything I've ever seen. Operating independently of large, establishment humanitarian organizations that couple the security of heavy-duty funding with the restrictions of dealing with a board of directors, the entire organization is run out the second floor of a two-bedroom flat in uptown Chicago.

Kathy, an unassuming woman with wildly intense eyes, met me at the door. My nerves began to fade as Kathy asked me about myself. The fact that I was a drummer in a punk rock band was a bit of a novelty to her. She had no idea there was such a network of socially conscious punks, even in the most obscure corners of the country. As I explained to her about punk, she was fascinated.

Kathy explained to me the origins of *her* community, the Catholic Worker movement, a world-wide network of hospitality houses that have been a hub of radical activity for years. We realized that our two communities were almost identical: both involved an intense, far-reaching support network of activists and information and both involve individuals who refuse to blindly accept the artificial political boundaries of the society which we live in. It was a very touching and important revelation for us both. We continued to talk for an hour or so. By the end of our conversation, I had agreed that I would to go to Iraq.

In agreeing to go, Kathy made sure I understood the threats that had been levied at Voices by the Justice Department. I knew that by agreeing to bring medicine to the Iraqi people, I could be facing a potentially huge fine and serious jail time. But I realized deep down inside that I felt that the sanctions were truly evil. The only way I could think of to confront that evil was to go to Iraq, regardless of the consequences.

la: people go, they see first hand the tremendous civilian suffering and they come back impassioned to find anything they can do to educate other people about what's happened and to try and bring an end to the sanctions.

I know you've now been contacted by the Treasury Department and told that there will be fines. Why did they take so long? It took 19 delegations before they realized that you weren't joking around? [laughs] Do you have any idea why the government let so many groups go through?

JG: It's kind of bizarre.

KK: We're curious! We'd love to see some good, enterprising journalist try to suss that one out. We'd heard some rumblings before. In November of 1997, a team came back and 11 of the videotapes and trinkets they had bought in Iraq—even the labels from water bottles bought in Iraq—were confiscated. My passport was confiscated in February of 1998 after several of us had gone over during one of the bombardment threats. ¶ I wonder if maybe there just wasn't a directive that came from the Office of Foreign Assets Control to try and financially shut down the various groups that are defying sanctions. There is a group called Pastors for Peace that has sent many delegations to Cuba. There's also one called another called Global Exchange. In recent months both of them have received an increasing amount of correspondence from the Office of Foreign Assets Control. ¶ The other theory is that since July of 1998, we've sent a delegation nearly once every two and a half weeks. With that number of people coming back and doing

outreach, maybe somebody decided that this group's got to be shut down.

How long does a delegation stay over?

JG: We were there for 10 days.

MB: Total time is between two and three weeks. But you're in the country for a total of ten days.

So it sounds like since July, one group would come back and immediately another group would go out.

KK: They really were ships passing in the night.

The people are so friendly and hospitable. If they're going to fight about anything, it's about who is going to take you into their home. We found Iraqis to be overwhelmingly friendly.

I'm curious how one even goes about getting into Iraq. It's not like United is running flights into Baghdad every hour or anything. [laughs]

KK: One of the clear hassles is getting a visa from the Iraqi government. I think they're understandably sensitive to the possibility that foreign intelligence agencies might be trying to infiltrate into their country. But of course as it turns out, some of the strongest intelligence operatives were working for the UN anyway through UNSCOM, the United Nations weapons inspectors. [laughs]

JG: But 85 percent of what they found out was worthless. [laughs]

KK: We've had a hard time getting visas. But we are increasingly being recognized as a group that will reliably come back and do education and outreach, and that it's gotten a lot easier. One of the first things you have to do is set up a working relationship with a non-governmental organization in Iraq who will invite you to come over. By virtue of that invitation, you get a leg up on trying to get a visa. A letter to cross the border is also big help, otherwise it can take forever. ¶ Then of course, you can't travel directly into Iraq by air, you have to go through another country. We always choose Jordan, which means we fly into Amman. When you get to Amman you have to load-up. Now we buy our water in Amman because we're really, really distrustful of the water in Baghdad now—even the bottled water. That's a new dilemma. You used to be able to at least trust the bottled water in Iraq, but now we're being told that you can't. We try to bring as much medicine as we can carry on the plane without having to pay extra baggage fees. Then, usually, we pick up another \$1000 worth of medicine in Amman. ¶ Then you have to get a driver—and a reliable driver at that because it's a horrendous road—and you need a vehicle. We're really lucky because we do have a very fine driver who can wear twelve different hats. We've relied on him for many different things. And then you just get ready for a long drive across the desert and you emotionally brace yourself for the tremendous devastation that awaits you.

As a part of Voices in the Wilderness' 17th delegation, I traveled to Baghdad with a theologian, a carpenter, a student organizer from Gaza and a paramedic. What I saw was complete devastation. All over Baghdad I was surrounded by abandoned buildings, storefronts in disrepair, run-down schools and decaying hospitals. The ghost of

All over Baghdad I was surrounded by abandoned buildings, storefronts in disrepair, run-down schools and decaying hospitals. The ghost of what Iraq once was followed me around everywhere.

what Iraq once was followed me around everywhere. Since the end of the Gulf War, Iraq has been unable to sell its oil on the open market, depriving the country of its chief source of income. A 250.00 Dinar bill, once worth the equivalent of \$800.00, is now worth 15 cents.

My delegation visited hospitals and schools and met with UN officials, representatives of the Iraqi government, religious leaders and

families. Every place we visited, and every person we spoke with, made it very clear that eight and a half years of the most comprehensive sanctions in United Nations history have destroyed what was once a very prosperous country filled with well-educated and healthy people.

The hospitals we visited were deplorable. This in a country that at one point had a medical system that was the envy of the entire Middle East. It is in the hospitals of Iraq that you find the victims of weapons of mass destruction. Hundreds of children, sometimes two or three per bed or even on the floor with their grief-stricken mothers, lie there without much hope of surviving. The United Nations reports that seven thousand Iraqi children die each month as a direct result of the sanctions. Preventable and treatable sicknesses, such as cholera, typhoid and gastroenteritis are rampant due to lack of clean water, food and medicine.

In one hospital, I sat with a child who had been diagnosed with Leukemia, a disease once rare in Iraq, but has become increasingly common since the Gulf War. In developed countries, the cure rate for the disease is 70%. In Iraq it is now near zero. It's believed that the increase in Leukemia cases are due to the use of Depleted Uranium, a bomb casing first used in the Gulf War. DU is the one of the densest metals on

That's what I wanted to talk about next. What is it like now in Iraq?

MB: The drive from Amman to Baghdad is a thirteen-hour trip across the desert. It's kind of rocky, especially on the Jordanian side—it looks like another planet. It's a monotonous, flat journey. The highway in Iraq is in surprisingly good shape. There's not much traffic on it, so it's not seeing a lot of deterioration, and they do have petroleum products so they can fix the roads. Nevertheless it's still a very dangerous voyage because there are oil trucks going down to Jordan. You look at their tires at some of the gas stations and think, "Oh my god, they're driving on just a thin sheet of rubber." That's one of the reasons why there's a high accident rate on that road. This is the most dangerous part of the whole trip. ¶ People don't think of this. Instead, they're worried about you getting attacked by Iraqis. If you'd been to Iraq, you'd never even think of that. [everyone laughs] The people are so friendly and hospitable. If they're going to fight about anything, it's about who is going to take you into their home. We found Iraqis to be overwhelmingly friendly. ¶ Once you're in Baghdad you see a city that looks pretty normal at first. There are cars on the roads, there's food in the stores, and people are out on the streets. But then after you're there a few days, you realize that nobody is buying the food in the stores...

JG: ...and there are a lot of people, but where are they going?

MB: Yeah, why are there always people out? Because nobody has any work to do. Unemployment in Iraq is, who knows, eighty to ninety percent. The whole country is out of work. ¶ You go to a hospital and you look at the outside of the building, it looks like a modern facility, but kind of run-down. Then you go inside and you see that nothing's been painted and the plumbing's not working. Sometimes you see water or sewage on the floor—in a hospital no less! Quite often there are no screens for the windows, so there are flies everywhere. Iraqi hospitals are horrible places; they are warehouses for people to come who are ill and will most likely die because they can't get treated properly. ¶ The murder of Iraq is a hidden kind of genocide. You have to look closely to find it. You have to go into hospitals; you have to go to the poor areas of Baghdad, which are not that easy to find and are not that accessible. But even if you go to those places you might not see it. When you think of the UN statistic of 7,000 children dying every month, that means about 250 children die each day. There are 300 hospitals in Iraq, so that means about one child on average dies every day in each hospital. That doesn't seem like a whole lot. That's not a real, dramatic form of death. When people think of wars, they imagine immediate bloodshed and killing, not large numbers of people dying very slow, gradual and invisible deaths. It's the perfect way to wage war against these people in terms of public relations because it's very hard to see the killing that's constantly going on. Of

course, if you're the parent of an Iraqi child, you realize the risk that abounds. If your child gets sick, you're going to go to the hospital and there's no treatment for them. That's the kind of fate that's grinding at these people. And that's why the Iraqis are so desperate to get the UN sanctions lifted.

Kathy, you were in Iraq while bombs were falling in December. For you personally, as well as the people you met while you were there, what was that experience like?

Kathy: When we were driving into the country, we were wondering if they would really bomb on the first night of Ramadan. We had heard from people back in the 'States that the word was they weren't going to do it. ¶ As soon as we arrived, I had an almost compulsive feeling that I wanted to be together with two families in particular. I feel very drawn to their kids and I wanted them to know that we tried to come there to be with them. So we went to the first family and the children were excited to see us. But one of them, an 11-year-old boy, just clung to me. I knew there was something that was really different. It wasn't a typical 11-year-old kiss on each cheek. He just really *clung* to me. Then, suddenly, somebody came running into the house yelling and everybody went outside. The bombing had begun again. The little ones didn't know quite what was happening, but I looked at their mother's face and I could see that she was bracing herself for this next attack. As it turns out, that night was the least of the horror show the last four days had

earth. The Allied forces that used it left radioactive dust all over Iraq.

The doctors in Iraqi hospitals work under impossible conditions. These highly trained, competent doctors feel helpless with so little resources at their disposal. One physician told me that most of the time the only difference between himself and his patients was his white coat. The average physician's salary under the sanctions is the equivalent of \$3.00 per month. One doctor I met worked three jobs: a regular shift at a public hospital, a few hours at a private hospital, and helped out at his brother's auto shop. All this work and he can still barely afford to support his family. Other physicians I met supplemented their income by driving cabs.

When we visited schools, once again we witnessed children bearing the brunt of the sanctions. We found kids using textbooks that were grossly outdated, windows were broken, pencils and paper were rare (both cannot be imported under the terms of the sanctions). In the primary schools, many kids have dropped out of school to shine shoes or sell cigarettes and other goods on the street in order to help their families put food on the table. The irony of this situation is that like Iraq's decaying medical system, the country had a successful sys-

tem of public education prior to the Gulf War.

We visited the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, and we met with Yaako Ylitalo, the head of UNSCOM (the UN Special Committee in Iraq) in Baghdad. UNSCOM is responsible for seeing that Iraq has eliminated all of its weapons of mass destruction as well as its ability to create more in the future. Conflicts between

Why are there two so very drastic sides to the story? And why did I have to go halfway across Iraq to get the other side? These are questions I still don't have good answers to.

UNSCOM and the Iraqi government were supposed to have led to December's bombing. What we heard from the UNSCOM representative completely contradicted what I had been hearing in the media back home. He said that the Iraqis had been generally cooperative with the UN inspectors. Successful inspections and the monitoring of

been. ¶ By and large, December's bombardment didn't hit the electrical or sanitation facilities. It didn't strike the infrastructure the way other bombardments had. But there certainly was civilian suffering caused by the bombing. ¶ The thing that people were telling us again and again was that the maternity hospital had been damaged. The place where newborns are coming into the world had its windows knocked out. The air conditioners were falling down. The ceiling was wrecked. ¶ The day after the bombing ended, we made it our business to try and visit people who'd been harmed. Their vulnerability was just unbelievable. We talked to one woman who'd been hit by a piece of flying shrapnel. Her intestine had been ruptured. She explained to us was that there was only one colostomy bag in the entire hospital and the physicians had to wash it out between patients. We visited people who had multiple leg fractures. There is a certain type of external cast called a *fixator* that's needed to heal a leg properly. So many of the people had bloody bandages and obviously didn't have the right cast. Doctors can't get the equipment that they need to help people heal. ¶ We talked with people in Al Deer, a simple village in the far south of the country. We went to homes where the bombing of a telecommunications center had caused all of the windows to be blown out. People were just terrified. Ten women in a clinic in the village had spontaneously aborted—they had miscarried out of fear. ¶ On Christmas Day, some of the villagers in this very simple vil-

lage said "Excuse us, we have a present for you. Merry Christmas." They proceeded to give us a big, heavy chunk of a Tomahawk cruise missile. They wanted us to have it and to bring it back to our country. I just felt this sense of *shame*. ¶ It was bewildering to them: Can it really be that the president of your country would punish our whole nation to cover himself for his problems? Everyone I talked to really felt that was why they were bombed at that particular moment. But Iraqis also said that they knew it would happen again. I left people who thought that as soon as Ramadan ended, there was a very good chance the attacks would resume. ¶ I keep on thinking that if even a fraction of what hit Iraq in those four days had hit Chicago, people would be in mass panic. They'd be headed to the highways; there would be chaos. But in Iraq, people were terribly dignified throughout. But that isn't to say that they weren't terrified and fearful. Every family that I talked to said the bombardment was horrible, that I wouldn't have believed how the windows and walls shook. ¶ There was one man, a civil engineer. He must have been pretty well paid at some point in his life because he had a very nice house in Al Adil on the outskirts of Baghdad. I met him in the hospital. His head was bandaged and the left side of his face was paralyzed. There were huge bruises on his forearms. His eyes were all black and blue. He had lost his hearing in one ear. He said to me, "Here is the address of my home, my brother will take you there. You go and you see it and you

will think that chemical weapons were stored there because it looks so bad." A missile had come in through the living room window of his house while he and his children were sleeping *right there* huddled together. Amazingly, it didn't explode, it just took out the back wall. We surveyed the area and there could not have possibly been a military target anywhere near that suburban home. People understandably feel that they are the targets of the bombing. But with all that said, the main deadliness of US policy is the sanctions and the economic warfare. That claims many more lives than the bombardments.

I keep on thinking that if even a fraction of what hit Iraq in those four days had hit Chicago, people would be in mass panic. They'd be headed to the highways; there would be chaos. But in Iraq, people were terribly dignified throughout.

MB: But it's also the combination of the two working in tandem. During the Gulf War, all the sewage and sanitation plants were bombed. No one could get clean water. For the next eight years, Iraqis couldn't even get the parts that they needed to repair these plants. This has created a horrible public health crisis. It's ways like this where the bombing works in conjunction with the sanctions to kill as many

sites capable of creating new weapons of mass destruction went on uninhibited on a daily basis. Why are there two so very drastic sides to the story? And why did I have to go halfway across Iraq to get the other side? These are questions I still don't have good answers to.

The relentless compassion I was shown by the Iraqi people made it impossible for me not to cry when I watched the bombs rain down on them in December. To me, we weren't bombing a faceless "enemy." We were bombing my friends.

My interactions with the people I met on the street were the most compelling experiences I had in Iraq. It is important to remember that Iraq is not a country inhabited by just one man, Saddam Hussein. It's a country of 23 million people that simply want to live their lives the way that they choose. Our country, along with the United Nations, has denied them that right for the last

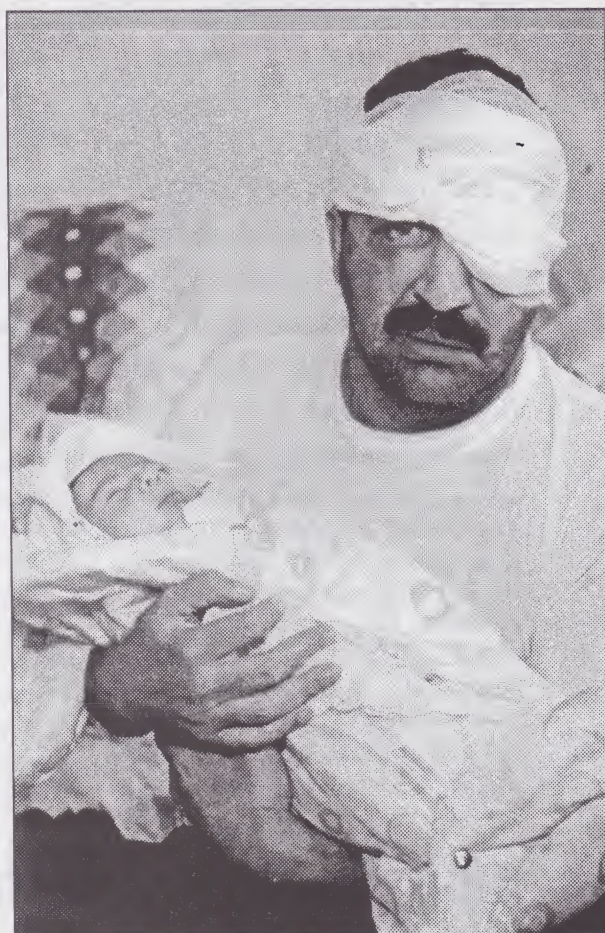
eight and a half years. The relentless compassion I was shown by the Iraqi people made it impossible for me not to cry when I watched the bombs rain down on them in December. To me, we weren't bombing a faceless "enemy." We were bombing my friends. I met no enemies in Iraq.

...

As I made the withdrawal from the bank, I braced myself for the work that lay ahead. With bombs falling, our already hectic schedule was going to increase exponentially. As I entered the office—the same second floor apartment where I had my first meeting with Kathy Kelly—I was caught up in a whirlwind of activity: phones were ringing off the hook, medicine was being inventoried, faxes were scrolling endlessly off the machine. There were too few people trying to do too many things. Reporters' questions were being answered, press releases were being drafted, and we were trying to secure plane tickets and visas to get another delegation off to Iraq the next day. The moments of reflection I was able to have back at the bank suddenly seemed as distant as my summer spent in the back of a tour van. I sat down and picked up a phone. There was work to be done. ©

Faces of the Enemy: portraits from Iraq

photos & text by Alan Pogue



YARMOUK HOSPITAL, BAGHDAD IRAQ. "I am a science man, a civilian—not government or military. I have worked in the United States two times. I have many friends there. I know the people of the United States have a big heart. Why do they not have a big heart for the Iraqi people?"

people as possible. ¶ In this most recent bombing, they attacked a refinery outside of Basrah, which is reported to have produced 36 percent of the country's oil. Now people here might read that and say, "Well they bombed a refinery." But what that means is that the small amount of oil they're allowed to produce, they can put out even less of it now. That means less money in the economy, fewer jobs, more poverty and ultimately more death, more disease and more starvation.

KK: In Basra, there were two hospital wards filled with severely malnourished children. Seeing all of these emaciated babies would break your heart. I was with the doctor there. He was so angry, he could barely contain himself. The doctor said, "If you want our oil, take it! But *stop* killing our children. Look at them." There was *one* ampoule of potassium in this entire hospital and every kid in the ward needed it. Potassium is cheap stuff. It's not any big shake as far as pharmaceuticals go, but they couldn't get it. The same goes for antibiotics. A lot of the kids have infections and all of them need to be treated with antibiotics. You're supposed to take antibiotics four or five times a day. At four o'clock in the afternoon, they were totally out of antibiotics. By five o'clock, the pharmacy was expecting to be completely out of all medicine *period*. ¶ The UN agencies and officials repeatedly tell us that the distribution of the medicine that is coming into the country operates like a Swiss watch. We've had the World Health Organization assure

us that they've monitored it and that what's there gets distributed effectively and efficiently. The problem is that it's just not enough. You're talking about a country that imported almost 90 percent of its medicine before the Gulf War. They had plenty of oil revenue to buy it with. Now, with their economy as crippled as it is, they just don't have the revenue to get the medical equip-

Isn't this like taking 7,000 children hostage? Imagine if they were all marched into a stadium and told to sit there. Can you imagine somehow taking a gun and slaughtering every single one of those children? Maybe *that* would horrify people. But what's the difference?

ment and the medicine that they need. ¶ Add to this all of the Depleted Uranium debris which is scattered across Southern Iraq and we're seeing a fivefold rise in childhood cancer. This has all been reported, but none of it is really well documented. Nonetheless, in Basra they have three children born every day with congenital deformities. I've seen this myself. While on the ward with newborns, I saw one child with no

mouth and another child with arms attached to its torso. ¶ Isn't this like taking 7,000 children hostage? Imagine if they were all marched into a stadium and told to sit there. Can you imagine somehow taking a gun and slaughtering every single one of those children? Maybe *that* would horrify people. But what's the difference? You starve them to death and let them slowly die of curable diseases? This is the kind of slaughter our country is engaged in. Yet we blame Iraq's leaders for this horrible tragedy, as if somehow our leaders aren't at fault. As if somehow the major scandal going on in America has anything to do with Bill Clinton's personal sexual choices. The major scandal in our country today has *everything* to do with 7,000 Iraqi children that are dying every month because of US foreign policy.

So why do the sanctions continue?

JG: That's kind of a big one. [laughs] Oil is definitely a factor. We've been trying since the '50s to figure out how we can somehow get our hands on Iraq's oil. Iraq owns the second largest oil reserve in the world. Iraq is also the one country that has that kind of oil that says "no" to American foreign policy. With Iraq's oil off the market, Saudi Arabia pumps twice as much oil.

MB: I think what Jeff is saying is right. The country has said "no" to the United States. This is the crucial thing. It's not just a banana republic that said "no" to America, it's a country with huge oil reserves. For a

Desert Fox & the Impeachment: Another Look by Joel Schalit

When American and British warplanes let bombs fly on Iraq in mid-December of last year, it was their biggest attack on Iraq since the 1990 Persian Gulf War. For nearly five days, Allied bombers and warships rained heavy munitions on the heart of the Fertile Crescent, launching over four hundred cruise missiles at military targets ostensibly dedicated to manufacturing weapons of mass destruction in defiance of the 1991 cease-fire accords. On the evening of December 21st, the allied bombing campaign ended, supposedly out of respect for the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

What distinguished this attack on Iraq from previous attacks is that the American government's propaganda apparatus drummed up very little political sympathy for the operation among American citizens. In fact, as opinion polls from around the world showed, no one really took American and British military justification for the attacks seriously. Nearly everyone surveyed in various news reports agreed that the timing of Desert Fox was related to deliberation over

Clinton's impeachment, which not so coincidentally was taking place simultaneously in the House of Representatives.

The day American and British planes ended their mission, the House voted to impeach America's president. The bombing was a stereotypically transparent diversion, and no one on any side of the world political spectrum thought otherwise.

The impeachment debate and the bombing of Iraq both commenced on the same day. The day American and British planes ended their mission, the House voted to impeach America's president. The

Faces of the Enemy: portraits from Iraq

photos & text by Alan Pogue



BASRAH MATERNITY AND PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL. Child with leukemia. The recovery rate for childhood leukemia was 70% before the Gulf War. Now the recovery rate is 0%.

decade, Iraq fought a war against Iran in order for the West to keep so-called "Muslim Fundamentalists" at bay. Then Iraq's leader decided that he was not going to kowtow to US commands and he made it clear that he wanted to expand his empire. America's response was to make an example of him by killing his people. They're not doing *anything* to hurt Saddam Hussein personally—it's clear that we're not. We're using his people to tell other countries in the region "If you try and do this, if you try and say 'no' in any way to the US having control over your resources, this is what will happen to you: We will starve your children. We will deny them medicine. We'll deny them food and watch them die slowly. We are ruthless." The other countries in the region know this because they're close enough to it to see it. They know what's happening. That's why during the recent bombing campaign we saw protests in countries like Egypt, Syria, Turkey and even Saudi Arabia. Because people recognize what's being done: That we're exploiting the Iraqi people in order to make an example of their leader.

JG: The sanctions are so obviously not about what Saddam Hussein has done to his own people because other leaders in that region have done just as terrible things. For example, we didn't criticize Hussein when he gassed Kurds in Halabja back in 1989. We were still his friends as far as I know. I think that's what Hussein thought too.

MB: We supported that killing because those Kurds were aligned with Iran. We wanted him to do that.

JG: If the sanctions are about chemical weapons, it gets even more confusing. If you look at the Iran-Iraq war, we not only sold him many of the weapons that he used, we

nized—we are able to convince every country in the region to continue to buy our weapons. Who are among our top 10 weapon purchasers? Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey, and Israel. Plus, with Saddam Hussein in place yet thoroughly demonized, the US government can convince taxpayers that they have to keep on bankrolling an

They're not doing *anything* to hurt Saddam Hussein personally—it's clear that we're not. We're using his people to tell other countries in the region "If you try and do this, if you try and say 'no' in any way to the US having control over your resources, this is what will happen to you: We will starve your children. We will deny them medicine. We'll deny them food and watch them die slowly. We are ruthless."

were also gave the Iraqi government satellite intelligence and weather information on how and where to most effectively use them.

KK: It's very chilling because if you look at oil prices having tumbled as much as they have, it's pretty hard to imagine that the oil industry or the defense industry would want Iraqi oil back on the market right now. If Iraqi oil came back on the market then the Saudis will conceivably see their share of the market go down and then they would not have as much revenue as the United States would like them to have in order to buy weapons. By having Saddam Hussein remain in place—crippled but sufficiently demo-

incredibly big defense budget, too. There isn't *anything* out there to justify spending \$296 billion dollars on defense. We haven't though that the sanctions have been in place to get Saddam Hussein out of power, but rather keeping Saddam Hussein in power has been a convenient reason to keep the sanctions in place. The sanctions haven't been about *eliminating* weapons of mass destruction. They've been about maintaining the America's capacity to *sell* weapons of mass destruction. It's Orwellian, totally! ¶ The sanctions themselves function as a weapon of mass destruction. What we've seen as a result of contaminated water is biological warfare. You don't need to introduce

bombing was a stereotypically transparent diversion, and no one on any side of the world political spectrum thought otherwise.

If the entire nation knew why we were bombing Iraq, why then did Americans let the President get away with it? Because the bombing campaign allowed our country to experience a ritualized violent catharsis through the destruction our missiles wreaked on Iraq, a catharsis that America desperately needed in order to deal with the economic irrationality and cultural meaning of Clinton's impeachment process.

The Republican attempt to remove President Clinton comes at a time when the economy is performing better than it has in over thirty years. We have a federal budget surplus of over seventy billion dollars. Welfare rolls, regardless of how they were diminished, are lower than ever. According to recent labor statistics, unemployment now stands at less than five per cent. The problem is that not everyone feels victorious. The Religious Right, with its political presence damaged during the November elections, is fighting to preserve its influence and power in American politics. What better opportunity to regain some of this influence could present itself, than the President's mar-

ital infidelities? All you have to do is subject it to a litmus test devised with extra-judicial standards, like Protestant sexual morality, and the presidency is effectively besieged.

Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's evangelical focus on Clinton's sexual improprieties serves as the perfect cultural foil by which to destroy the President's success, which he attained by restructuring America's economy after the Cold War. That Starr's investigation has culminated in a Senate trial of the president represents the triumph of conservative cultural initiatives in using religious standards of moral conduct as a means by which to successfully de-legitimize secular political authority. This is no small achievement, particularly when the economic and cultural grounds upon which the Religious Right nourished itself over the past twenty-five years have radically shifted.

American society is far more conservative now than it was at the time of the first Gulf War, in no small part because of the activist efforts of fiscal and religious conservatives. The problem for conservatives is that a Democratic administration has taken credit for this transformation by taking over conservative political ideology and making it palatable to the old liberal center. This fact has not been

contaminants into the water, you just need to prevent people from getting spare parts and chlorine and eventually the water will be putrefied and horrid enough to kill people. It's a terribly cynical and chilling reality when you look at it. You almost want to stop and say, "Wait a minute, it can't be that bad." ¶ When we started this campaign, we had an analysis that stopped well-short of saying that the sanctions are in place to convince every other country in the region that they must subordinate themselves to serve US interests or the US will kill a generation or more of their children. But there was one Christmas in 1997 when the Archbishop of Basra came to the United States and he was here in our living room. We were laying out the theory that the sanctions were in place to keep Iraqi oil off the market and to benefit the defense industry. The Archbishop replied, "No, the sanctions are in place to kill a generation of Iraqi children." We all had to say, after he left that whether that was the intent or not, it is what's happening. Can you really blame the Iraqi people for thinking that way?

Of course not. It's the only conclusion you could come to.

MB: But there is a purpose behind the killing. That purpose is not to kill just to kill. The purpose is to kill in order for people to remember that if you say "no" to the United States, this is what will happen. Just as the Irish remember their famine 100 years later, the Iraqis will remember their dead brothers

and sisters—the one or two or three that didn't make it in their family—100 years from now. They'll remember this and they'll remember why. The US is saying, "We want them to remember this so they will obey our every order." But we know from human history that what happens when people are treated like this is that it breeds hatred and war and more violence. ¶ That's why efforts like our own shed a little bit of light on a very dark situation. It says that at the very least, there are some Americans who understand what's being done to you. That has had a tremendous ripple effect. Other countries are also doing the same thing. The pharmacists union of Egypt is going there with medicine. A guy from Iceland came to Iraq at Christmas with toys and got off the plane in a Santa suit—that's a very strange thing to do in a Muslim country. [laughs]

JG: He put out a press release during the last bombing that read, "Stop the bombing, Santa Claus is coming to Baghdad!" [laughs]

MB: The Iraqi people understand that there are people in the world that realize what is being done to their country and that they want it to stop. That is a sign of hope. It's growing. But it still hasn't reached the powers that be.

Bringing this back to Voices, as a result of criticizing American foreign policy and going to Iraq—not to mention being very high profile about it all—you have now been threatened with this huge fine. How are you preparing to deal with that? It could get a lot more expensive, and potentially result in every person that's partici-

pated in your nineteen delegations doing jail time. At five persons per trip, that's almost a hundred people.

KK: The fines are still only proposed. We don't know exactly what the government plans to do. We were given a 30-day period in which to respond and we did respond. We assembled ourselves in Washington DC and held a press conference. We had a very clear and very thoughtful letter [see "Enemy of the State"] letting them know that, "Yeah, we did exactly what you said we did, this is why we did it and this is why we will continue." We also told them that any money that had been entrusted to us has not been given to us in order to give it to a government who could go out and purchase more weapons or make more suffering in Iraq. That money has been donated to purchase medicine and help us with our campaign. ¶ I feel like this is the most patriotic I've ever been in my life. Democracy is based on information. We have information and we're doing our best to get it out to a public that might otherwise never hear about it.

This is another "big" question: How can the sanctions end? With the theory that you have proposed, it seems like the sanctions are this entity that no one can stop. It seems inconceivable that someone will just say, "We made a big mistake, the sanctions are lifted. Saddam Hussein is still in power, he's not actually that bad." It seems like we've painted everyone into different corners. How do you see this possibly resolving itself?

lost on conservatives, particularly when they look at the overwhelming approval rating continually granted to Clinton's presidency. This approval inspires the desire for revenge that underlies the impeachment process.

One way to read both the timing and the ferocity of America's attack on Iraq is that it is a reflection of the government's fury at its own destabilization by forces jealous of Clinton's neo-conservative political and economic achievements.

One way to read both the timing and the ferocity of America's attack on Iraq is that it is a reflection of the government's fury at its own destabilization by forces jealous of Clinton's neo-conservative political and economic achievements. What better place is there for Americans to act out such rage than the Middle East, a foreign space reserved by the American political unconscious for ritualistic throat

slitting behavior that we'd rather not assume we were capable of engaging in within our own country. No wonder we blow other nations to smithereens. Wars such as the Gulf War are all about geographically displacing the latest fashion in moral regression currently taking place at home.

That's why it's important to read the attack on Iraq differently from the manner in which Republicans criticize it. When conservatives are able to come up with the same kind of suspicious accounts of political activities that liberals are usually responsible for, an analytical vacancy is created. Leftists need to provide an explanation for significant events like Operation Desert Fox that side-steps traditional liberal arguments about how foreign military expeditions either represent a desire for global dominance or are simply spectacles designed to divert our attention from domestic problems. Particularly when, given certain radical exceptions, right-wing critics of the bombing would have done exactly the same kinds of pathologically disturbed, violent things that Clinton has done were they forced into the same kind of political crisis. ©

MB: It's true that we've painted all these people into corners. The US government has painted itself into a corner because many countries in the world—including UN Security Council members France, Russia and China—see the futility of this policy. They see it very clearly. That's why they've been the most vocal about stopping the genocide, and normalizing relations. The US is slowly becoming politically isolated. What's going to happen to that struggle remains to be seen. But there are precedents in recent history: Back in the '80s during the Reagan years, we had this huge thing against Libya. They were the great demon of the world. Well, it just kind of fizzled. Muammar Qaddafi is still in power and nothing seems to have happened. It just moved out of people's consciousness.

KK: I think we need to be really conscious of how public debate about Iraq develops in this

country. If it appears that the debate can't be won, maybe we would do well to see what we can do to mobilize efforts in other countries, especially those where they might stand to economically gain something if the sanctions

We need to ask how it is possible that no Congressperson has gone over to Iraq when so much money has been spent over there and clearly it is a focal point of US policy.

are lifted. ¶ In the mean time, I think we need to keep on pushing the key questions. We need to push the media to go beyond appearances and find out where this 7,000 children dying per month figure is coming

from. The media needs to get into the hospitals and see what is going on. We need to ask how it is possible that no Congressperson has gone over to Iraq when so much money has been spent over there and clearly it is a focal point of US policy. With the presidential election coming up, perhaps the Democrats will be looking for something to claim that they have accomplished during the last four years. Maybe there is a feeling that one of those accomplishments could be removing Saddam Hussein from power. If that were to happen, I don't see how they could still keep the sanctions in place. ¶ I also think you can never give up on the education battle. There must have been a time when the abolitionists said, "How can slavery end?" There was certainly a time during the Vietnam War when it didn't look like it would end. I know that Iraqi children can't afford despair or doubt on our part. ©

Enemy of the State

The Office of Foreign Assets Control vs Voices in the Wilderness

The Threat

Excerpts from a December 3rd, 1998 letter from OFAC warning Voices members of proposed penalties for their work.

Dear Ms. Kelly and Messrs. Handelman, Mullins, Sacks, and Zito:

The Office of Foreign Assets Control ("OFAC") has reasonable cause to believe that you and Voices in the Wilderness ("VW") have engaged in certain prohibited transactions, detailed below, relating to the embargo against Iraq in 1997. Inasmuch as no license or approval had been issued by OFAC prior to such transactions, they violated the Iraqi Sanctions Regulations ... and underlying statutes and Executive orders.

Violations

The violations of the regulations and underlying statutes and Executive Orders for which this Notice is issued concern your and VW's exportation of donated goods, including medical supplies and toys, to Iraq absent specific prior authorization by OFAC and transactions relating to travel to Iraq and activities in Iraq. Additionally, the violations involve transactions for the purpose of, or which have the effect of, evading or avoiding, or which facilitate the evasion or avoidance of any of the prohibitions of the Regulations, as well as a conspiracy formed for the purpose of engaging in transactions prohibited by the Regulations. In this regard, VW has organized members to deliver goods to Iraq in violation of the embargo and made express statements of the organization's knowledge of its violative actions. As to Messrs. Handelman and Mullins, the violations also concern the importation of goods and services of Iraqi origin. Specifically, the violations are as follows:

1. In March 1996, VW exported goods, including medical supplies, valued at approximately \$18,000, to Iraq absent prior specific license or other authorization issued by OFAC;
2. In August 1996, VW exported goods, including medical supplies, valued at approximately \$8,000, to Iraq absent prior specific license or other authorization issued by OFAC;
3. In November 1996, VW exported goods, including medical supplies, valued at approximately \$10,000, to Iraq absent prior license or other authorization issued by OFAC;
4. In November 1997, VW exported goods, including medical supplies and toys, valued at approximately \$30,000-40,000, to Iraq absent prior license or other authorization issued by OFAC;
5. On or about November 21, 1997, Mr. Handelman exported film and videotape to Iraq, through Jordan;
6. Between on or about November 21-30, 1997, Messrs. Handelman, Mullins, Sacks, and Zito, engaged in currency travel-related transactions to/from/within Iraq absent prior license or other authorization from OFAC. These currency transactions included, but are not limited to, the purchase of food, lodging, ground transportation, and incidentals;
7. On December 3, 1997, Mr. Handelman imported goods and/or services, into the United States at Detroit, Michigan. Upon entry of the goods, the United States Customs Service ("USCS") seized them (District Case Nos. 98-3801-000235). The goods included an Iraqi water bottle label, an Iraqi stamp, photographic film, video and audio tapes and/or cassettes, postcards, and assorted papers;

8. On December 3, 1997, Mr. Mullins imported goods and/or services, into the United States at Detroit, Michigan. Upon entry of the goods, the USCS seized them (District case No. 98-3801-00238). The goods included a necklace, a wooden drum, audio tapes, a computer disc, notebooks, pictures, and miscellaneous papers and cards;

9. In July 1998, VW exported goods to Iraq absent prior specific license or other authorization issued by OFAC; and

10. In September 1998, VW exported goods, including medical supplies, to Iraq absent prior specific license or other authorization issued by OFAC.

Proposed Penalty

You are hereby notified that OFAC intends to issue a claim against each of you and VW for a monetary penalty in the amounts set forth below:

As to VW: \$120,000, computed at \$20,000 for each Counts 1-4, 9 and 10

As to Mr. Handelman: \$12,000, computed at \$1,000 for each of Counts 5 and 7, plus \$10,000 for Count 6

As to Mr. Mullins: \$11,000, computed at \$1,000 for Count 8, plus \$10,000 for Count 6

As to Mr. Sacks: \$10,000 for Count 6

As to Mr. Zito: \$10,000 for Count 6

With respect to the disposition of goods seized in the above-cited USCS District Cases from Messrs. Handelman and Mullins, we recommend that, inasmuch as goods have been involved in the violation of U.S. law by U.S. persons, such goods be forfeited to the United States in accordance with USCS procedures.

Election of Proceedings

You have the right to make a written presentation to FAC within thirty (30) days of the mailing of this Notice. Such written presentation in response to this Notice need not be in any particular form, but it should contain a response to the allegations herein, and set forth the reasons why the penalty should not be issued, or if issued, why the amount should be less than proposed in this Notice.

Sincerely,

R. Richard Newcomb

Director

Office of Foreign Assets Control

Blacklist: items banned under the sanctions

This is an incomplete list of materials banned from Iraq under the sanctions. This list contains mainly consumer items. There is no comprehensive list of prohibited products. Such a list would include millions of items.

List compiled by
Elias Davidsson

Adhesive paper	Baskets
Aluminium foil	Bath brushes
AM-FM receivers	Batteries
Ambulances	Battery chargers
Amplifiers	Beads
Answering machines	Bearings
Ashtrays	Bed lamps
Auto polish	Belts
Axes	Benches
Bags	Bicycles
Baking soda	Books (all categories)
Balls (sport or play)	Bottles

The Response

Voices in the Wilderness' December 30th letter back to OFAC.

Dear Mr. Newcomb:

This letter is in response to your prepenalty notice of December 3, 1998. The notice proposes a fine of \$120,000 to Voices in the Wilderness (VitW) for engaging in prohibited transactions "relating to the embargo against Iraq", specifically, the "exportation of donated goods, including medical supplies and toys." In addition, four members of our campaign, Messrs. Handelman, Mullins, Sacks and Zito, face proposed fines of \$43,000 for engaging in "currency travel-related transactions to/from/within Iraq."

On January 15, 1996, we notified U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno of our intentions to publicly challenge the morality and legality of the economic embargo against the civilian population of Iraq and asked Ms. Reno to join us. To this end, VitW has led nineteen delegations to Iraq, including our most recent delegation, which arrived in Baghdad on December 19, 1998, at the height of the U.S. led bombing campaign.

On January 22, 1996, David H. Harmon, of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), warned members of our campaign to "refrain from engaging in any unauthorized transactions related to the exportation of medical supplies and travel to Iraq." Mr. Harmon warned that "criminal penalties for violating the Regulations range up to 12 years in prison and \$1 million in fines" and "civil penalties of up to \$250,000 per violation..." VitW informed Mr. Harmon in February, 1996, of our intentions to "continue our effort to feed and care for the children

and families of Iraq...by collecting medical relief supplies and then, openly and publicly,

We will not allow a government to dictate our conscience.

transporting these supplies into Iraq..." We further stated that "we are not governed by rules that license people...but rather by compassion" and invited Mr. Harmon to join us.

With respect to the enforcement of this embargo, we are conscientious objectors. We will not allow a government to dictate our conscience. We will not allow the U.S. government, in the name of democracy or national security, to order us to cooperate with a strategy designed to starve the people of Iraq, to deprive them of medicine and medical supplies, spare parts for infrastructure, pencils for

Bowls	Carving knives	Coils
Boxes	Cellophane	Combs
Brass	Chairs	Computers and computer supplies
Broilers	Chalk	Copper
Busses	Chess boards	Cupboards
Calculators	Chiffon	Cups
Cameras	Children's wear	Desk lamps
Candles	Chisels	Desks
Candlesticks	Clocks	Detergents
Canvas	Cloth	Dictaphones
Carpets	Clutches	Dishware
Cars	Coats	Dishwashers
Carts	Coaxial cable	
	Cogs	

school children, chlorine for water and sewage treatment, toys, employment, or any of the essentials necessary to sustain daily life.

We object to the licensing regulations which your office upholds and we, in good conscience, will not participate. We believe it is our civic responsibility to speak out against injustice and our moral and religious responsibility to act on conscience: to do justice; to feed the hungry and care for the sick. The licensing process is an obstruction of our right to exercise these civic, moral and religious duties. We will not participate in the enforcement of an embargo which uses food and medicine as a weapon, which has led to the deaths of over one million Iraqis and is a Crime Against Humanity.

Since March, 1996, delegation members have delivered symbolic amounts of medicine, medical supplies and (in some cases) toys, directly to public hospitals and, in some instances, to the Iraqi Red

We will not participate in the enforcement of an embargo which uses food and medicine as a weapon

Crescent Society for distribution. Our members have witnessed the devastating conditions of civilian life resulting from the 1991 Gulf War and the ensuing eight and one half years of the most comprehensive embargo in the history of the United Nations. The embargo has prevented Iraq from restoring its infrastructure, including the public health care system and water, sewage and sanitation treatment facilities.

While in Iraq, our delegations have met with U.N. officials, NGO's, religious leaders and children and families. We have visited internal refugee camps, clinics and hospitals. Members have held dying children in their arms. We have talked to their parents who tell us they cannot provide sufficient food nor clean water for their children. We have talked with doctors who have the skills to save lives, but lack the facilities and medical supplies.

Our experience has taught us that comprehensive sanctions, such as those imposed on Iraq, are an insidious form of warfare that target the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable populations. UNICEF reported on April 30, 1998 that "Economic sanctions on Iraq over the past seven years have had a devastating effect on the majority of the Iraqi people, particularly children...Over half of the children are dying from malnutrition, never a problem before sanctions." UNICEF cites the following statistics on death: a child

dies every 12 minutes; 250 people die a day; 90,000 a year because of sanctions.

No military or political objectives can justify a form of economic warfare that exacts such a civilian toll. International law and the U.N. charter prohibit acts of warfare that target civilian populations. The embargo as applied amounts to the commission of a Crime Against Humanity as specified in the Nuremberg Judgment. Our own Declaration of Independence declares that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Surely this applies to innocent children and powerless civilians in Iraq.

Upon returning from Iraq, our members have felt compelled to speak to the media, schools, universities, civic organizations, churches, synagogues and mosques about what they witnessed. This education has become a critical counterpoint to stated U.S. foreign policy objectives. It should be noted that over the past eight years, to our knowledge, no Member of Congress or official of the Administration has visited Iraq to witness the effects of the embargo on its civilian population. For a democracy to function information must be available. Since Iraq is a major foreign policy focus, and billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have been allocated to maintain this policy, our members have taken it upon themselves to bring back vital information.

On December 3, 1997, U.S. Customs agents confiscated goods from returning delegation members, including photographic film, video and audio tapes, notebooks, pictures, "a wooden drum" and other goods. When asked by Messrs. Handelman, Mullins, Sacks, and Zito why these items were being confiscated, agents replied that they were "evidence of crime." We sincerely hope you have reviewed the video, pictures and notes, for we believe this material represents compelling evidence of a Crime Against Humanity. We request you return this property to its rightful owners at your earliest convenience.

While acknowledging that we have violated the embargo regulations and will continue to do so, we believe that the proposed fines should be dismissed for the cited reasons. In any case, we will not consent to pay any fine; to do otherwise would betray the very foundations of our democracy as written in the First Amendment to the Constitution: freedom of conscience and worship, freedom of association and expression for both religious and political purposes, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Further, our funds have been contributed by citizens across this country for the expressed purpose of purchasing medicine and continuing the work of ending the embargo.

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Electric cords	Flowerpots	Grindstone	Hoses	Lathes	Microfiche
Envelopes	Forks	Hairpins	Hydraulic jacks	Lawn mowers	Microphones

Faces of the Enemy: portraits from Iraq

photos & text by Alan Pogue



ST. GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, BAGHDAD, IRAQ. Boy at his first communion service. He is one of 140 children to receive first communion that Sunday in July, 1998. One in 20 Iraqis are Catholic.

In conscience, we cannot deviate from our stated mission.

In the spirit of Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that those who have violated the embargo were taking reasonable, nonviolent steps to mitigate violations of international law and to provide humanitarian assistance to victims in Iraq of Crimes Against Humanity.

If your office or any official charged with enforcing the regulations seeks to test our commitment or the correctness of our conduct, we would welcome that opportunity as yet another forum for public debate on the morality and legality of the embargo against Iraq.

We ask what kind of nation have we become, when the government

of the most powerful country on Earth prosecutes its citizens for the simple act of providing humanitarian aid to our brothers and sisters in Iraq. We simply reject the government's contention that we cannot carry medicine to the sick, and assert that it is a greater evil to let the children die.

We ask you to join in our effort to end the scourge of the embargo on the children and families of Iraq.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kelly
for Voices in the Wilderness

The Facts of Death

UN reports on the repercussion of the sanctions

• "The increase in mortality reported in public hospitals for children under five years of age (an excess of some 40,000 deaths yearly compared with 1989) is mainly due to diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition. In those over five years of age, the increase (an excess of some 50,000 deaths yearly compared with 1989) is associated with heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, liver or kidney diseases." Approximately 250 people die every day in Iraq due to the effect of the sanctions. —UNICEF, April 1998.

• "The Oil-for-Food plan has not yet resulted in adequate protection of Iraq's children from malnutrition/disease. Those children spared from death continue to remain deprived of essential rights addressed in the Convention of Rights of the Child." —UNICEF, April 1998.

• Seven years after the imposition of the blockade on the people of Iraq, more than 1.2 million people, including 750,000 children below the age of five, have died because of the scarcity of food and medicine. —Verified by the UN, June 1997.

• "32 percent of children under five, some 960,000 children are chronically malnourished—a rise of 72 percent since 1991. Almost one quarter (23%) are underweight—twice as high as the levels found in neighboring Jordan or Turkey." —UNICEF, Nov. 1997.

• "One out of every four Iraqi infants is malnourished. ... Chronic malnutrition among children under five has reached 27.5%. After a child reaches two or three years of age, chronic malnutrition is difficult to reverse and damage on the child's development is likely to be permanent." —UNICEF and World Food Programmed (WFP), May 1997

• "Iraq's health system is close to collapse because medicines and other life-saving supplies scheduled for importation under the 'oil-for-food' deal have not arrived. ... Government drug warehouses and pharmacies have few stocks of medicines and medical supplies. The consequences of this situation are causing a near-breakdown of the health care system, which is reeling under the pressure of being deprived of medicine, other

basic supplies and spare parts." —World Health Organizations (WHO), Feb. 1997

• "Since the onset of sanctions, there has been a six-fold increase in the mortality rate for children under five and the majority of the country's population has been on a semi-starvation diet." —WHO, March 1996

• "More than one million Iraqis have died—567,000 of them children—as a direct consequence of economic sanctions . . . As many as 12% of the children surveyed in Baghdad are wasted, 28% stunted and 29% underweight." —UN FAO, Dec. 1995.

• "Famine threatens four million people in sanctions-hit Iraq—one fifth of the population—following a poor grain harvest... The human situation is deteriorating. Living conditions are precarious and are at pre-famine level for at least four million people." —UN FAO, September 1995.

• "Alarming food shortages are causing irreparable damage to an entire generation of Iraqi children". —UN FAO and WFP, September 1995.

from the Iraq Action Coalition: <http://leb.net/IAC/>

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Soap pads

Faces of the Enemy: portraits from Iraq

photos & text by Alan Pogue



BAGHDAD, IRAQ. Mother with her child. The baby is severely anemic. Malnutrition is suffered by 26% of Iraqi children, UNICEF reports. The "oil for food" program has had only a slight affect on this.

A Call to Action

On Sanctions and the US War Against the People of Iraq

by Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman, Edward Said, and Howard Zinn

At the end of 1998, the United States once again rained bombs on the people of Iraq. But even when the bombs stop falling, the U.S. war against the people of Iraq continues through the harsh economic sanctions. This is a call to action to end all the war.

This month U.S. policy will kill 4,500 children under the age of 5 in Iraq, according to UN studies, just as it did last month and the month before that, all the way back to 1991. Since the end of the Gulf War, at least hundreds of thousands — maybe more than 1 million — Iraqis have died as a direct result of the UN sanctions on Iraq, which are a direct result of U.S. policy.

This is not foreign policy — it is sanctioned mass-murder that is nearing holocaust proportions. If we remain silent, we are condoning a genocide that is being perpetrated in the name of peace in the Middle East, a mass slaughter that is being perpetrated in our name.

The time has come for a call to action to people of conscience. We are past the point where silence is passive consent — when a crime reaches these proportions, silence is complicity. There are several tasks ahead of us.

First, we must organize and make this issue a priority, just as Americans organized to stop the war in Vietnam, and to protest U.S. policies in Central America and South Africa. We need a national campaign to lift the sanctions.

This kind of work has already begun, and those efforts need our help. For the past

several years, individuals and groups have been delivering medicine and other supplies to Iraq in defiance of the U.S. blockade. Now, members of one of those groups, Voices in the Wilderness in Chicago, have been threatened with massive fines by the federal government for "exportation of donated goods, including medical supplies and toys, to Iraq absent specific prior authorization." Our government is harassing a

This is not foreign policy—it is sanctioned mass-murder that is nearing holocaust proportions.

peace group that takes medicine and toys to dying children; we owe these courageous activists our support.

Such a campaign is not equivalent to support for the regime of Saddam Hussein. To oppose the sanctions is to support the Iraqi people. The people are suffering because of the actions of both the Iraqi and U.S. governments, but our moral responsibility lies here in the United States, to counter the hypocrisy and inhumanity of our leaders.

Also, there has been a virtual embargo on news of the effects of the sanctions in the mainstream media. For the most part, the American people do not know what evil is being carried out in our name. We must continue to apply

pressure on journalists at all levels — from our local papers to the network news — to cover this tragedy. We should overwhelm the major press with letters to the editor and put pressure on journalists to cover the story.

And we must realize this could be a long struggle. Preparations should begin for all the possible strategies, including civil disobedience once a sufficient number of people are committed. Direct action that forces a moral accounting likely is going to be necessary.

Whatever else we are doing, we should treat this as an emergency and put it at the top of our agenda. Existing groups can work on the issue, new groups may need to be formed, and national networks need to be built. A good central source of information exists on the web at <http://leb.net/IAC/>.

Without action by us, the horrors will go on, the children will continue to die. We must appeal to the natural sympathies of the American people, who will respond if they know what is happening. We must therefore bring this issue, in every way we can, to national attention. The only way to avoid complicity in this crime is to do everything we can, and much more than we have been doing, to end the sanctions on Iraq. This issue must be discussed in every household and every public forum across the country. ©

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Faces of the Enemy: portraits from Iraq

photos & text by Alan Pogue



DIJLA SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, BAGHDAD, IRAQ. This school is run by Catholic nuns but any girl of any faith may attend. This Muslim girl is singing "We Shall Overcome" in Arabic as taught by Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness and the principal, Sister Suzanne.



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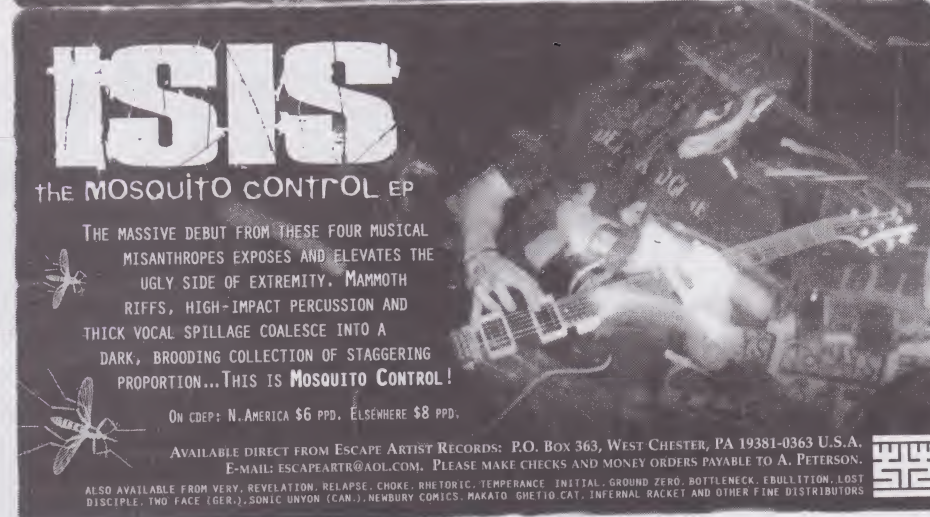


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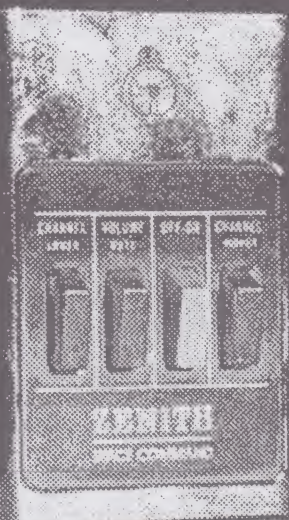
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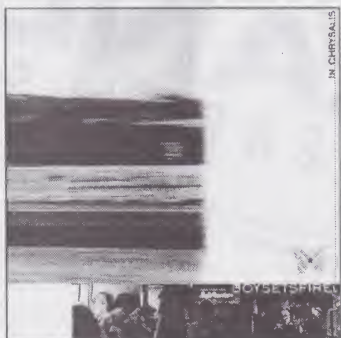
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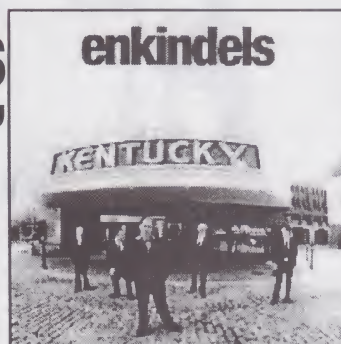
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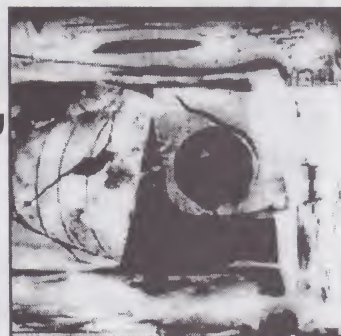
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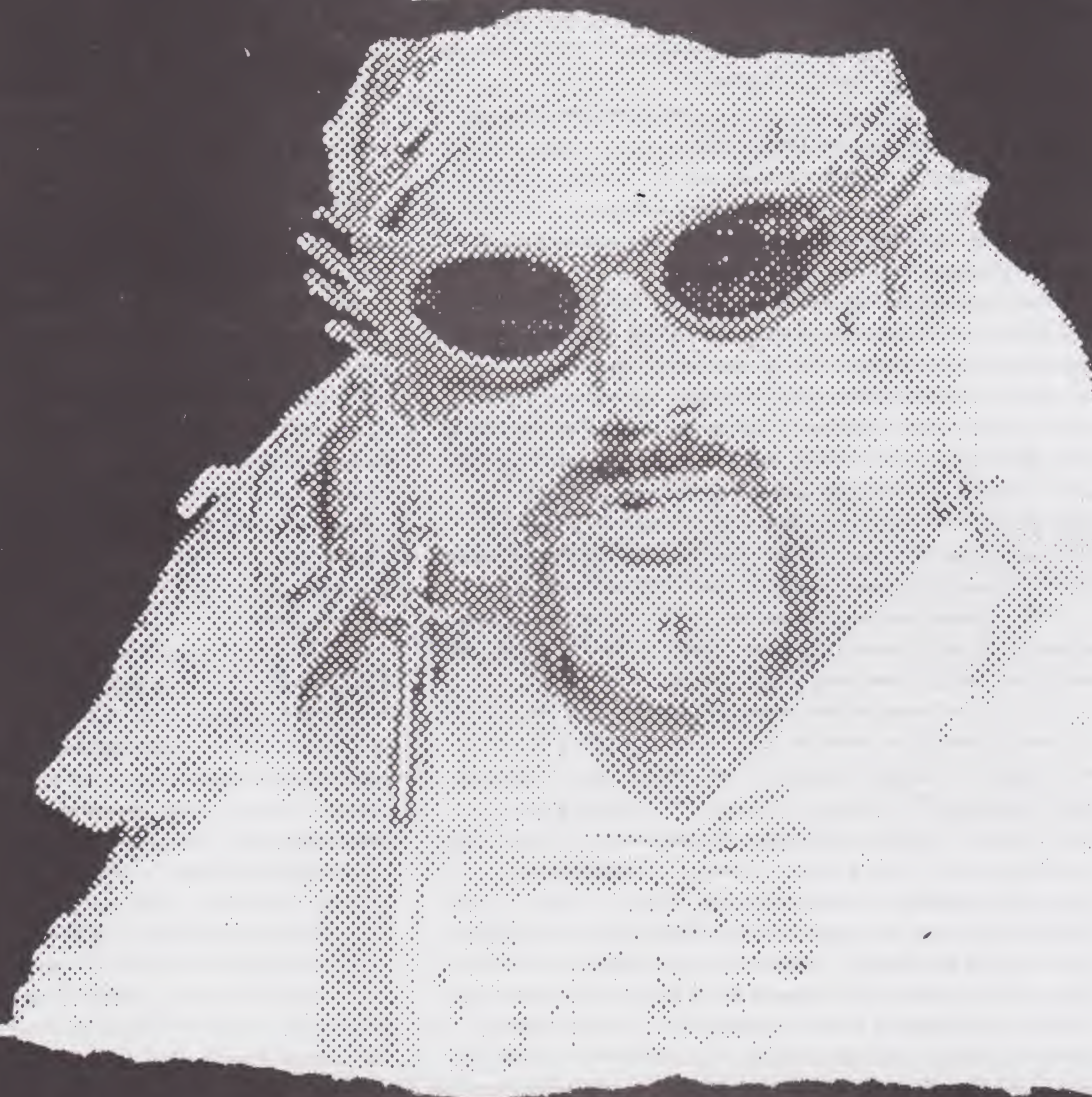
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The "Body" Politic



How the youth vote bodyslammed two-party politics in Minnesota

by Alex McCown



On November 8, 1998 in the state of Minnesota, something very strange happened. At around a half-hour after midnight, the newly elected governor went up to make his acceptance speech. His supporters cheered wildly, his campaign team lined up to receive their hugs, everything was going as usual. Except that the audience of the candidate, Mr. Jesse Ventura, was, by and large, kids. College students, people in their 20s, teenagers—you couldn't have thrown a rock without hitting at least ten of them. The mood was raucous, wild, and generally the antithesis of just about every other major campaign party I've seen in my life. As Governor-elect Ventura began his speech, he was interrupted every five seconds or so by various screams, chants, and hoots offered up by a crowd that looked more like it had just won the Superbowl than elected the governor of a state. Even Ventura himself had to stop and smile to himself on several occasions—how could he not? He was the most loved man in the room. And there must have been no doubt in his mind, in those instants, about who had put him up on that podium, accepting that job: The kids of the state of Minnesota.

The first question that arises, naturally, is "Why?" Well, the mainstream press has done a typically pathetic job of exploiting and blowing into a three-ring circus the election of Jesse Ventura, complete with continuous snide and patronizing references to Ventura's previous career as a professional wrestler—the implication, of course, being that anyone who would do such a thing is clearly an incompetent. Somehow, a career politician is a more "respected" job—although why is anyone's guess. Since the mainstream press had snubbed Ventura right up until the people elected him, only the people of Minnesota even knew anything of what he had to say.

The argument *against* Jesse can be made fairly easily—and have nothing to do with his wrestling career. Having voted for the Socialist candidate myself, I know most of the reasons.

Jesse seems to me to be a pretty strict Libertarian—socially liberal, economically conservative. It's the new hip thing to be, as most people on college campuses could tell you. Jesse believes in the economic self-sufficiency of people. When talking about financial aid for college, Jesse said, "If you're smart enough to go to college, you're smart enough to know how to pay for it." Apparently nobody ever bothered to tell Governor Ventura that *knowing* how to pay for something is different from being *able* to pay for it. He has stated his intention of taking away many of the college loans, grants, and statewide aid that currently permits vast numbers of Minnesota youth to attend school, overlooking the fact that many colleges and universities are priced out of reach of the average working family. His belief in economic self-sufficiency has also led him to state that homelessness is a problem that should be solved by charities—not local or state government. So while Jesse's great in my mind on issues like gay rights, civil liberties and the like, his reactionary stance on all things economic kept me from voting for him.

"They day we elect the most progressive governor possible is the day pigs fly," Jennifer Sword, another St. Paul resident and Jesse voter, explains. "I'm impressed we even voted this, and fucking destroyed the comfort of the two-party system. We could just as easily have a dumbass Republican nazi for governor [referring to second-place finisher Norm Coleman]. Jesse is totally benign—he might even do something good. At least I'm not sitting around dreading what he's gonna fuck up next, who he's gonna exploit next, like I would with

almost every other politician. I'm not worried about Jesse's fucking people over—he's trustworthy. What you see is what you get."

However, now that he's in power, Jesse has already started to surprise some pundits—myself included. While Jesse may pay lip-service to libertarian values, creating worries about "the money staying where it is," but he's already made the unexpected move of putting more money into the pockets of those who need it. With Minnesota's billion-dollar surplus, the Republicans in the state Senate drafted a rebate proposal that, in dishing out the tax rebates back to the populace, essentially gave most of it to the rich. Ventura quickly came out with a proposal of his own, one that distributed the money in a—gasp!—progressive way, giving more to the working class and less of a percentage to the wealthier. If naysayers fear that Ventura economic views will keep the rich richer and the poor poorer, he certainly seems to be trying to prove them wrong.

Even before this recent surprise, the reasons to vote for Jesse were much more radical than most of the major networks or newspapers want to talk about. They'll throw out a few comments about people "fed up with the partisan squabbling between the two major parties—this is a demand for those parties to get back in shape". If you look at editorials in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and even the more reliable *New York Times*, every single commentator seems to assume this is a sort of reprimand to the two major parties to stop being so blatantly stupid—as if a return to some semblance of "business as usual" is what everybody wants, as though we all just need a reason to go back to voting for the Republicrats. They don't seem to want to go near the reasons most people who actually voted for him give—the insinuations are a little too extreme for them and their corporate sponsors.

"The two main parties are just one party," says Ventura Voter Carl Wedoff, a sophomore at Macalester College and guitarist for the band the Malachi Constant. "It's sort of a protest, a 'fuck-you' to that system, an effort to diversify politics." Wedoff echoes the sentiments of most young Ventura voters I've spoken to. They see the sad state of the current system, and realized that they could effect change. As with many youth today, they see politics as the sham it often is, but unlike the resignation of many youth elsewhere, Minnesota youth got the chance to make their voices heard.

"Something creative and different is good," explains Sword. "He won't be easily intimidated by the political action committees and corporations that most politicians are in the pocket of, y'know? Even a big macho wrestler white guy will have a less corrupt program than the average career politician."

It wasn't just Twin City youth that believed in getting rid of the two party system. KARE11 news had an interview with a 16-year-old farmhand in the northern part of the state who said basically the same thing: "The heck with two do-nothings, let's get a third do-something in there."

Such a radical message has been realized by many outside of the state—and the mainstream. When punk band Tribe 8 came through Minneapolis, lead singer Lynn Breedlove took a little time out to share in the victory: "So, you guys went and elected Ventura—right on! Fuck that two party system, man!" She was met by wild cheers from the audience.

The dividing line in this election was clear: while adults mourned and occasionally *threatened* to do something about the lack of choice in the 2-party system, the youth of Minnesota went out and did

something about it. And being too young wasn't always a barrier in making things happen.

"Yeah, I couldn't vote myself," eighth Grader Katie Lewison says, "but I convinced my parents to vote for him, and helped post flyers." How many elections can you name that bring out that kind of motivation, that excitement? Lewison sums up the feelings of many of her older counterparts: "Hell yeah, I fucking *did* something".

Much debate has taken place over Ventura's actual policies: "There's a counterbalance," explains Wedoff. "I really think he's honest, and he's not influenced at *all* by big corporations—he took no money from them. I think that evens out his sometimes idiotic ideas."

The money issue is a big one, maybe even bigger than Wedoff implies. Aside, perhaps, from Russ Feingold (Wisconsin's no-soft-money Senator), Ventura is probably the only major politician in America today who is not beholden to at least one large corporation. This message resounds with anti-capitalist youth and everyday teens alike. They see Jesse as someone who is working for *people*, not big money. Of course, his ability to turn down big money contributions is helped by the fact that Jesse has big money of his own.

"He is a celebrity and it's pretty obvious that he's rich," says Wedoff with a smile. "But the fact is, he talks, acts and sounds more like a regular joe than any other politician out there. He's anti-political, and that connects with a lot of people." In fact, private individuals not beholden to the system have historically sometimes made the

Waterman feels that Ventura may have represented something, but the change itself is negligible. "I am trying to figure out whether or not his message had anything to do with why he got elected. Yeah, it's radical, but he hasn't *done* anything yet! What's really changed?"

Waterman has a point. The governor-elect was guarded on saying anything specific regarding policy implementation during the campaign. While many say that's just Jesse not promising anyone the moon, it made him come across as a man without a plan. Ventura has his weak spots and political methodology is definitely one of them.

It's these weak spots—as well as his wrestling background—that have caused the major media to attempt to prove that everyone who voted for Ventura did so as a joke. But in fact, it's Ventura's political savvy in recognizing the importance of the youth vote that got him elected.

A week before the elections, when most college reporters couldn't get the two main candidates to return their phone calls, Ventura spent *two hours* at Macalester college's radio station, taking calls and explaining his positions on everything from prostitution (of course, mass media overblew his sensible maybe-we-shouldn't-arrest-everyone reply) to public schools (which he wants to keep public and increase funding for).

This kind of commitment to younger voters got kids and twentysomethings who would otherwise never go near the ballots to come out and vote for him. Youth's disillusionment with the political system is no joke. "Why didn't I vote before this?" Jake Beltzer, another Ventura voter asks. "Because politics tends to be a sham. Ventura,

Given a viable alternative, younger voters are ready and willing to radically re-shape politics in America.

best candidates. They are people with enough money that they needn't depend on large companies for handouts in exchange for promises.

It's his "regular Joe" demeanor that captivated many voters. As another Ventura voter, punker John Hecker says, "He's honest and forthright about what he wants. He does his wheeling and dealing in full public view." For instance, Ventura recently declared a day in February to be "Rolling Stones Day" in Minnesota. Why? He was given a few prime tickets for the Stones show in Minneapolis by the promoters. Unfortunately, he was just as quickly informed by his staff that he couldn't accept them, as they were political gifts and not permitted by law. Thinking quickly, Ventura reasoned that, by declaring the day "Rolling Stones Day," he would *have* to be in attendance in order to preside over the "ceremony."

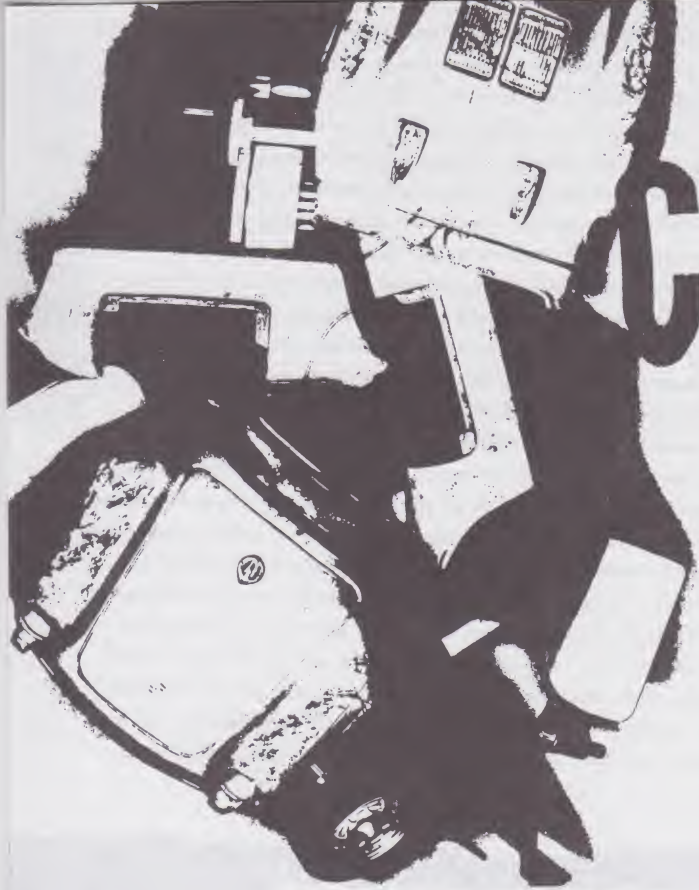
As Jen Sword says, "That's totally harmless, you know? I think it's great. Unlike the back-alley deals most politicians make, he's totally upfront about everything. What else do you want?"

Of course, not everyone is as enthusiastic about the election of Ventura, and what it means. Adam Waterman, a 21-year-old living in St. Paul, has a somewhat different perspective on the election. "I think Ventura definitely presented a sort of anti-establishment image that captured the national mood right now. But I was working [at a coffee shop] the night of the election, and as he began winning, I saw people I know walk in with this look of, 'What have we done?' It shocked the hell out of the people who voted for him that he won."

obviously, is no politician. He's not gonna lie—why would he? It gave me some hope to think that somebody who doesn't have a vested interest in the status quo is governor."

Studies have shown that with the youth vote behind a candidate, that candidate—from Bill Clinton down to the most grassroots city councilman—has historically been the victor. Candidates are certainly aware of this, it's just that most of them are so out of touch with the common citizen, let alone the youth, that they don't have the faintest idea of how to reach out in a successful way.

What nobody can deny, however, is that fact that apart from what Ventura's election will actually mean for the state of Minnesota, the way he was elected says worlds about the possibilities. Youth voting got a message across loud and clear: Given a viable alternative, younger voters are ready and willing to radically re-shape politics in America. Shown someone who at least seems to try and tell the truth, the under-30 crowd has demonstrated the power they wield—the ability to throw out the ineffectual one-party-masquerading-as-two politics that have dominated this country. The political climate of the day may indeed be anti-establishment, and what's so wrong with that? As always, the "establishment" has proven itself painfully incapable of addressing people's concerns. The election of Jesse Ventura scared the Republicrats, and with good reason: If this many kids get involved with politics all across the country, the end of the two-party domination may be in sight. ©



Car Wars

a controversial postering campaign in San Francisco

The economic boom in Silicon Valley has made San Francisco a renters hell. The influx of monied young professionals and rising rents are putting poor and working class people at risk of being pushed out of the neighborhoods they call home.

Nowhere in San Francisco is this more evident than the Mission district. Traditionally a poor and working class neighborhood with affordable rental housing, new development of condominiums and upscale "live-work" loft spaces being built are transforming it into an increasingly upscale neighborhood.

Out of the struggle against the gentrification of this neighborhood, a poster campaign dubbed the Mission Yuppie Eradication Project has popped up. Proclaiming this colonization can be turned back, the posters say that the way to push the newly arriving yuppies out is by destroying their vehicles—that if they know that their cars are not safe on the streets of the neighborhood that they will leave.

"We want to encourage people to resist the gentrification of the Mission," says Mission Yuppie Eradication Project spokesperson "Nestor Makhno" (his pseudonym taken from a famous Ukrainian Anarchist who lead a peasant army during the Soviet Revolution). "Gentrification is primarily a phenomenon of well-off types coming into a neighborhood. Their presence is completely parasitic and we don't want them around."

Makhno first got the idea for the posters from the yuppies themselves and the way they treat the environment around them. "A friend of mine and I were walking around and noticing that the yuppies are used to being in their little boxes of plastic and metal that when they are walking down the sidewalk they treat it as if it is their private property as well," he explains, "we then thought that attacking their cars, their property, is the way to get to them. People like that, their cars are very important to them, and if they feel their cars are not safe on the streets of the Mission, I hope that they will go away and not come back."

Makhno wants people to understand that gentrification is a reversible process. "We want to encourage a consciousness that gentrification is not inevitable, that people can take action," he says. "It does not have to be something that is really well organized, it can be mass spontaneous actions against the presence of bourgeois types in the Mission."

One problem with Makhno's plan is that nice cars aren't exclusive to yuppies. Many working class people buy nice cars for them and their families and to have those cars damaged would be an affront to the very people Makhno hopes to defend.

Karen Wickre, is one of those people. Wickre is not a newly

takes a militant edge to fighting gentrification by A. "Twitch" Doublinn

arriving yuppie, but a long-time Mission resident whose car was targeted by MYEP vandals. "I am a 14 year mission resident," she wrote in a letter to the local *New Mission News*, "and have lived in the same rent-controlled apartment the whole time. I love the Mission for its cultural diversity and working class residents, which includes myself. When I finally had enough money to trade in my old clunker for a new car, I bought a RAV 4. After having it for just ten days, it was torched and the vandals honked as they drove away. I guess someone—perhaps Nestor himself—did not like the fact that someone in the 'hood had a new car."

"It's a tough call to decide what's a poor persons car and what is not," Makhno says, recognizing the project's shortcomings. "There are many limitations to the action we are trying to get people to engage in, but what else can we do? It is possible that a poor person's car could get damaged. But if it is a choice between paying higher insurance premiums on your car or being pushed out of your home, which is more important?"

Makhno claims to have taken limited action against yuppie's cars himself. "I am not going to take responsibility for completely destroying any luxury cars," he states. "I have, however, keyed the paint on a few Sports Utility Vehicles and such. That is something anyone can do, key the paint, break the windows and slash the tires."

Despite his claims to the contrary, Makhno is often implicated when a car is damaged. He was also recently deemed a suspect in the arson inquiry of a Mission District warehouse which was recently burned down. "What motivation would I have to burn down a building so that the landlord could save money on demolition costs and put up yuppie condos?" Makhno asks. "Frankly if I was going to set fire to anything, it would be live-work yuppie condos."

The only crime that Makhno will unapologetically admit to is the vandalism that comes with putting up MYEP posters. But Makhno's posterizing crew has not met much resistance from police. "We have not been jacked up by the pigs," Makhno says. "One reason is that we have a good amount of people looking out when we put up the posters. But the other reason is that cops are the mirror image of what you see on cop shows on TV. They are lazy, poorly motivated and cowardly individuals who got the job because it was something an individual who is not too bright can do and get paid well to do. They are nowhere near catching us," he adds.

For obvious reasons, Makhno keeps information about his posterizing crew closely guarded. "We do not have a huge amount of people," he says, "but we have enough to have a few people looking out and

to put up about a hundred and ninety posters each time we do it."

The size of the MYEP crew or the number of posters they can get up in a night is fairly unimportant, however. Thanks to the vitriolic message of the posters, the message has spread quickly. Makhno's posters are bringing the argument on gentrification to the media and to the residents of the Mission in a new way, urging mass vandalism as a method to fight the influx of yuppies into the Mission.

When the *San Francisco Weekly* reprinted the MYEP posters, a bitter argument raged in their letters section for weeks. Responses to the article ranged from praise to threats of violence.

"You could definitely tell where people fell on the class lines by their response to the posters," says Makhno. "Members of the bourgeois, property owning class were enraged by them and reacted to them by being violent and antagonistic, but most of the poor and working people could sympathize with the message."

While the destruction of cars may seem extreme to many, Makhno can imagine even more brutal attacks on gentrification. "My friends and I don't have any plans to act on this in the near future," he says, "but sometimes I wonder if assassinating one landlord or real estate speculator a month until the bottom fell through in the housing market would be an effective way to solve the gentrification problem." Makhno's chilling statement brings the drastic rental situation in the Mission into frighteningly clear focus. With rents on the rise and no legal means to fight back the tide of monied professionals, some Mission residents have copped an "any means necessary" attitude to save their neighborhood from becoming playgrounds for the rich. ☺

Running Things Green In Arcata California.

by Derek Kenney

Arcata was a temporary stop on my journey to San Francisco. All I knew about the place before I moved there was that it had the reputation as being one of the most politically progressive communities in America. As I rode into town, I was overwhelmed by the environment that surrounded the town. During the two months I lived there this fall, I came to understand the local ecology as the primary source of livelihood and political inspiration for the people of Arcata. While I lived there, the Green Party governed Arcata. At one of the first shows I attended, I was introduced to Jason Kirkpatrick, the vice-mayor of Arcata. He was a 29-year-old punk person with a Submission Hold silk-screen on the back of his coat. It was an interesting time to meet the guy. The local Greens were positioned to make history with a ballot initiative that among other things purposefully restricted corporate operations within city limits. The intention behind the measure was to re-affirm the ability of the city to be governed by its own voting constituents, not by out-of-town corporate interests. With a 60% vote of support on November 3rd, 1998, Measure F was successfully passed.

According to the stipulations of the initiative, Arcata can legally restrict the establishment of chain stores within city limits. This constraint is based on the premise of supporting locally owned businesses. The only two chain stores I noticed while living there were a Safeway and a Taco Bell. Locals told me that the Taco Bell suffers from frequent lock gluing, window bricking and political flyering on a regular basis. But Measure F does a lot more than just curtail the spread of chains. It has an environmental component that prohibits local dumping of all pollutants by any local corporation. This is a significant change from what city municipalities and state governments normally allow firms to do. Usually corporations are allowed the right to dump a limited amount of pollutants into a local ecosystem in order to operate. Measure F prohibits even limited dumping. The rationale behind this move is that most corporations tend to take advantage of such traditional allowances. When they get reprimanded for exceeding their locally defined dumping limits, most businesses in question tend argue that they have to do it, otherwise it would be too

expensive for them to operate. Under Arcata's ordinance, the city can refuse business licenses based on a corporation's track record of such environmental infractions. Measure F was drafted and introduced to the ballot by an activist group called Citizens Concerned About Corporations. The majority of the organization's participants were also members of the local Green Party.

When party members Jennifer Hanan and Bob Ornelas were elected to Arcata city council they joined Jason Kirkpatrick, who was first elected to the city council in 1994. With these two victories, the Green Party now controlled three of the city council's five seats, marking the first time in US history that the Green Party governed an American city. Eventually, Kirkpatrick became the vice-mayor of Arcata. This in itself was not only an amazing achievement for the environmental movement, but for punks as well. Someone from our ranks not only moved into an establishment political position but Kirkpatrick's pioneering political achievement also got him recognized by Time, People and CNN, not mention a host of other mainstream news outlets.

When they ran Arcata city council, the Greens introduced a number of other projects equally as important as Measure F. One such project was opening up a community kitchen for the local chapter of Food Not Bombs, which was also assisted by a \$5,000 donation by a local resident. The Greens also introduced a free bike program, where a variety of bikes painted green sat around the city for free public use [for more on free bike programs, check out PP29's "Bikeage"]. The Green city council also introduced an initiative to create a police review board, a human rights committee, the development of a homeless shelter, and a free public skateboard park that was built with public funds and is maintained by the city.

A few days before I was to leave Arcata, I encountered a massive banner stretched between two buildings in the center of town. It was an invitation from the Green Party to attend the October city council meeting. The effort that Arcata's city council went to in order to encourage people to attend impressed me so much that I obliged them.

The firm that had been handling Arcata's waste disposal had come into a contractual conflict with the city. Behind closed doors, the



The local Greens created a working political model that undermines traditional American corporate influence in local politics.

Arcata city government had quietly agreed to a contract with a new disposal company instead. The deal stipulated that a new waste disposal facility had to be built. The problem with this new contract is that Arcata isn't very big. A waste facility would have a big impact on the city. The other difficulty created by the new contract is that the waste facility would also require trash to be imported by rail. The need to build a rail link to the new dump suggested to local environmental advocates that Arcata would be importing waste from other municipalities. The final major concern about the new plant is its proposed location. The city had agreed to build it right next to Humbolt Bay, which posed the possibility of toxic runoff into the local marine ecosystem.

Aside from the environmental issues at stake, there was an even more troubling concern underlying the Greens' call to attend the city council meeting. It had to do with the city council's subversion of the participatory democratic process. Arcata's city government had agreed to the new waste disposal contract behind closed doors—not in a public forum where it could be discussed and voted on. An Arcata citizens action committee was subsequently formed, and it filed a lawsuit against the city. The suit claims that members of the city government are privately benefiting from the new waste disposal contract. One councilman is alleged to have private interest in the property that would be leased for the facility. Another city council member is purported to have an investment in the new waste contractor.

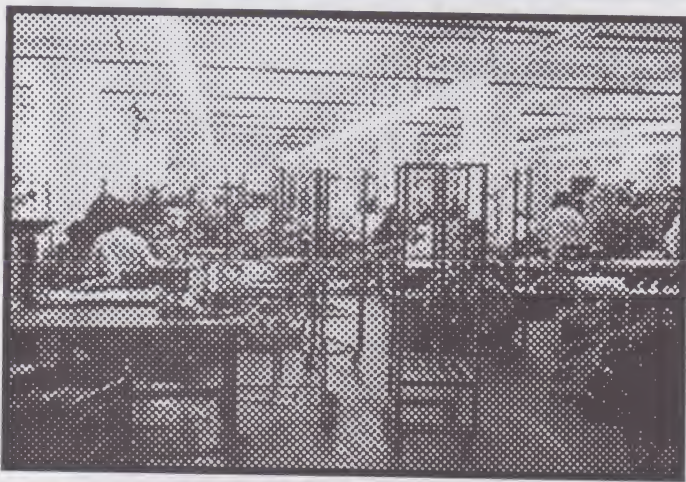
At the city council meeting that night, Arcata city hall was so full that people were on the sidewalk listening through open doors. When it became time to open the floor up to citizen concerns about the new waste disposal program, people from the city planning office, local environmental organizations, lawyers, and anarchists from Crowatan Art Works all lined up to express dissenting views. Throughout the meeting, Arcata's mayor would try and cut off the speakers while Kirkpatrick and Hanas would repeatedly object and remind the mayor of the time allotted per speaker. Kirkpatrick motioned that the contract be put on hold until the public had become adequately informed about the proposed project and be given the opportunity to vote on it.

Jason Kirkpatrick chose not to run in the 1998 elections. The Greens were subsequently defeated, and a Democratic Party majority now governs Arcata. Nonetheless, pioneering local Green politicians such as Jennifer Hanas and Bob Ornelas still have three years left to serve on Arcata's city council. This has helped allow the political influence of the previous Green administration to preserve, in combination with the new voting base that the party established during the period in which the party governed Arcata. According to the last poll of registered voters taken during the 1998 municipal elections, the number of people who were registered as Green was 3,735 out of approximately 15,000 registered voters in a town with a population of 17,000.

While Green control of Arcata may have ended, its reign has a far-reaching impact. Progressive politics now has a precedent in municipal American politics. The local Greens created a working political model that undermines traditional American corporate influence in local politics. The Green victory in Arcata proves that it can happen and gives hope that it can happen again—in Arcata and elsewhere. ©

For more information on the Arcata Green Party: www.arcata.com/green

Sweat Banned



Union victory in a Nicaraguan sweatshop By Sam Bain

Pedro Ortega is a Nicaraguan, a union organizer, a Sandanista party member and a survivor of thirty years of revolution, imperialism and Contras.

I am from the United States, a college student and a visitor to Central America. I know nothing of civil war, bloodshed or counterinsurgency.

Pedro Ortega and I are sitting together at a table in one of Nicaragua's few hotels. The student delegation I am part of will be spending the next few nights here. We're on a seven day sojourn to Central America to investigate conditions in garment factories that make clothes for export to the United States

Having driven through the shell of downtown Managua, I can't help feeling ill-at-ease in this hotel, as its luxuries contrast dramatically with the destitution of the people who live outside it. Nicaragua is the Caribbean Basin's second-poorest country, behind only Haiti.

My uneasiness wanes, however, as Pedro tells the story of the Chentex garment factory, the strike that won union recognition there a year ago and the historic first contract for Nicaraguan free trade zone workers signed but a week ago. He tells of Nicaraguan history, the Sandanista revolution and, by extension, himself.

Since gaining independence from Spain in 1821, Nicaragua suffered a succession of dictatorships and intervention from the United States. From 1937 until the Sandanista revolution in 1979, the Somoza family ruled Nicaragua with an iron fist, controlling much of the economy and silencing opposition with force. Evidence of Somoza's complicity in the 1978 assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, one of the regime's most vocal critics was one of the deciding factors that plunged the country into a near civil war. When the Sandanista Front, a party of leftist revolutionaries, marched into Managua on July 19th, 1979, Somoza fled into exile.

After the revolution, the United States initially attempted to aid the Nicaraguan economy, which had suffered from years of one-family hegemony. Newly-elected US president Ronald Reagan, however, quickly cut off all aid and denounced Sandanista rule as communist. While assailing Nicaragua with his cache of cold war rhetoric, Reagan began arming, funding and training an army of right-wing Nicaraguan exiles, the Contras.

Invading from bases along the Hoduran border, the Contras attempted to destabilize and undermine confidence in the Sandanista government through economic and military terrorism. These Contra raids were funded—and in some cases even *directed*—by the US government.

Covert funding for the Contras was exposed in the Iran-Contra scandal, in which arms were illegally sold to Iran with profits going to the Contra army. Even more chilling is the evidence uncovered last year by *San Jose Mercury News* reporter Gary Webb that linked the CIA with crack-cocaine rings in Los Angeles with profits again benefiting the Contras.

Internal strife and brutal raids by the well-funded Contras wore down the Sandanistas. In 1990, a US-backed coalition called the National Opposition Union was elected.

Economic development in post-Sandanista Nicaragua has followed the general neo-liberal economic model promoted by the US, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Manufacturing has expanded markedly with factory owners from all over the world seeing opportunity to exploit a country with very low prevailing wages as well as unenforced labor and environmental regulations. Manufacturers have also taken advantage of programs developed by the US Agency for International Development that allows goods manufactured in Central America to come back to the US with little or no tariff—and often carry a "Made in USA" tag. While the program may have boosted the number of low-wage factory jobs, Nicaragua has nevertheless become the region's second-poorest nation whose standard of living has sunk dramatically since the days of the Sandanistas.

To finance staggering international debts and to meet the terms of IMF loans, the NOU government made huge cuts in public services. Debt repayment now amounts to 39 percent of the Nicaraguan government's total expenditures while health and education together account for only eight percent. Health care has suffered especially—children and adults regularly die of curable diseases such as diarrhea, malaria and dengue. Privatization of public services has led to massive layoffs and unemployment has soared. An estimated 60 percent of Nicaraguan people are now un- or under-employed and three quarters of the total population lives in poverty.

With poverty and unemployment abound, *maquila* work—a Spanish word that originally meant a fee for milling grain, now com-

monly used to mean a foreign-owned assembly plant—would seem to be a godsend for the Nicaraguan people. Certainly the chance of landing a new factory job is on the mind of countless Nicaraguan families who barely subsist on income from odd jobs or other marginal employment. But the young women and men who are lucky enough to get one of the maquila jobs often find conditions inside the factories to be almost as bad as being unemployed.

Extensive research conducted by the National Labor Committee, *Hard Copy*, and Witness for Peace (among others) in cooperation with human rights groups in Nicaragua have revealed appalling conditions for workers at many of Nicaragua's garment factories. The daily ritual of a worker at factories producing clothes for export to the US such as Barons International (who produce the Faded Glory brand for Wal-Mart), Istmo Textile (Honors for Target), Nicseda (Polo for Ralph Lauren), is a cycle of abuse.

...
Packed onto old American school busses, maquila workers, mostly women as young as 15, ride to the industrial park called the *Zona Franca*—Free Trade Zone—where their factory is located. The typical workday is 7:00 am to 5:15 pm, with workers arriving at 6:45 in the morning to line up. Typically, workers are searched on the way into the factory—factory owners don't want any food, candy or drink to be taken inside because it might stain the fabric.

Once inside the factory—which is enclosed by barbed wire fences and armed guards—workers sit on hard metal benches at sewing machines to begin their day's work. Adequate ventilation or air conditioning in a maquila is rare and temperatures often exceed 100 degrees. Taiwanese, Korean or North American managers prowl the floor, forbidding conversation and sometimes throwing garments in workers' faces if they are not working fast enough. Verbal, physical and sexual abuse are common.

The standard lunch break is a half-hour and leaving the factory compound is prohibited. Workers may either eat at the company cafeteria, which they must pay for, or run to the fences to buy soda and small pastries from vendors who pass the food through the barbed wire.

Work continues into the afternoon and in the busy season there is forced overtime. Workers are generally led back into the school busses

Manufacturers have also taken advantage of programs developed by the US Agency for International Development that allows goods manufactured in Central America to come back to the US with little or no tariff—and often carry a "made in USA" tag.

around 7:00 pm after a search on the way out of the factory to make sure they didn't steal scraps of clothing. This cycle is repeated six days a week.

When a worker cashes his or her paycheck at the end of the week, it is most likely not enough to meet the basic cost of living. The base wage for a maquila worker is 10 to 20 cents an hour. An average wage with overtime, incentives and bonus pay is around 30 cents an hour. The very fastest sewers can earn something between 40 and 43 cents an

hour. Even while living in small dirt-floored houses constructed of scrap metal or bare cinderblocks with no refrigerator, shower and only one faucet, FIDEG—an independent research institute in Nicaragua—found that workers are only able to afford less than half of the basic necessities. Many parents, barely able to provide food for their children find themselves unable to pay to send their kids to school, which has several fees attached to it in post-Sandinista Nicaragua.

Management of maquilas assert that wages are sufficient, but workers vehemently disagree. As one worker told an NLC investigation, "It is a lie that our wages are adequate. Our children don't even have toys. We make baseballs out of old socks. We cannot feed our children right. We don't know meat."

With the influx of maquila jobs—along with the false promises they bring—veteran activists such as Pedro Ortega saw new opportunities for organizing. Ortega was in the minority, however. To most Nicaraguan human rights activists, leftist politicians and established labor unions, organizing the maquilas was taboo. With unemployment running at 60 percent, fiercely anti-union management who would just as much move a factory out of Nicaragua entirely than allow a union to form, and factory buildings themselves hidden inside compounds guarded by armed sentinels—organizing the factories

On January 24th, 1998 Chentex workers submitted a list of signatures to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Labor to request legal recognition for their union. The next day, 90 workers whose names appeared on the list were unceremoniously fired.

looked nearly impossible.

It was not that workers in the Free Trade Zone didn't want to organize (as Ortega would later discover, a vast majority did). Rather, it was the firing, harassment, intimidation, blacklisting and sometimes physical violence against any worker suspected of even sympathizing with a union that was holding organizing attempts back. Every single attempt to organize maquilas in Nicaragua over the last five years had been met with harsh management reactions and none had prevailed against them. The experience of Ortega and 1,500 workers at the Chentex factory in the Las Mercedes Free Trade Zone would change that.

...

The Chentex maquila was the subject of a November 1997 investigation by *Hard Copy* and the National Labor Committee that exposed child labor, physical and sexual abuse, forced overtime and below-subsistence wages of 23 cents an hour. The Chentex workers were sewing jeans for JC Penny's Arizona brand, Faded Glory and Bugle Boy. When the *Hard Copy* story broke, many Americans were shocked. But the aftermath in Nicaragua was chaotic.

Immediately after the report aired, Chentex managers fired several workers who were interviewed on air. The issue dominated the local press, with maquila owners denouncing Ortega as a Sandanista combatant and a traitor. The Taiwanese managers of Chentex ordered a demonstration against *Hard Copy* and the National Labor Committee at the Ministry of Labor's office. Managers gave the workers 100 Cordobah (approximately 10 dollars—the equivalent of 43 hours for most workers) to attend. The Chentex managers had

even arranged for busses to pick workers up from the factory and deliver them to the protest.

Luckily, local unionists and workers fired from Chentex for organizing were ready for the uproar—and would use it to their advantage. Ortega and a group of fired workers showed up at the demonstration armed with a megaphone. When a worker fired for complaining about working conditions called to the crowd, "Are we exploited in the Free Trade Zone?" the workers called back, "Yes we are exploited!" She continued: "Is there sexual harassment in the Free Trade Zone?" The answer: "Yes there is sexual harassment!" When a bewildered Ministry of Labor official asked the woman why she did not come to the Ministry of Labor, she replied that she had—and she was fired for it.

The pro-Chentex demonstration completely backfired and the media was there to cover it all. Later, workers gave testimony to Nicaragua's General Assembly and gave interviews to TV, radio and newspapers.

While all this was going on, Ortega and other organizers were busy gathering signatures and strengthening the already considerable support for a union. On January 24th, 1998 Chentex workers submitted a list of signatures to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Labor to request legal recognition for their union. The next day, 90 workers whose names appeared on the list were unceremoniously fired. Immediately, the Chentex workers went on strike. By 10:00 that morning, only 100 of the 1,500 employees were still working. The strike was a success: Work stopped completely, and management saw no option but to cave in.

After more conflict in the months to come, the union and Chentex management signed their first collective contract in July of 1998. It is the first union contract in any of the Nicaraguan Free Trade Zones.

...

It is after this year-long struggle that I got to speak with Chentex workers, meeting at dusk in Tipitapa, a city where many of them live. They are ebullient about the union.

"Before," one worker told me, "they would take our time cards and threaten to fire us if we did not work overtime. Now, we only work overtime if we want to."

The contract won for Chentex workers goes far beyond overtime. Saturday work is no longer required and the Chentex work week looks almost normal: Monday through Friday, 7 am to 5:15 pm with a 45 minute lunch break. For the first time, a sick worker is allowed to go to the doctor and there is compensation for the family of workers who are injured or die. The factory also pays for half of workers' eye care and glasses.

Having fought a watershed anti-sweatshop struggle that involved a coordinated campaign here in Nicaragua and in the United States, the Chentex workers are clearly empowered and proud of their victory.

Ducking clotheslines and jumping puddles on the dark dirt roads of Tipitapa, Pedro Ortega and I make our way in and out of tiny dirt-floored piecemeal houses, stopping to chat with the brothers, sisters, parents, friends and *compeñeros* of the workers who walk with us. They are simply excited. Excited to have won their battle and excited for the next one. They are happy to have us here in solidarity, not as charity. As the pitch black descends on our group, I can't believe how fantastic this is. ©

The student delegation was sponsored by the National Labor Committee. For more information about the NLC and a full report of our trip, contact the NLC at 275 7th Ave. NYC NY 10001 or visit the NCL website at www.nicnet.org

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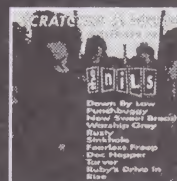


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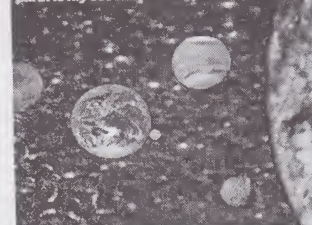
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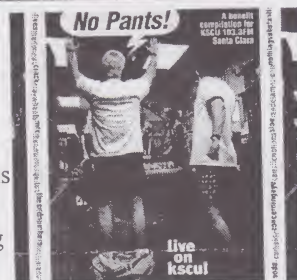
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TV Nation

by John Siciliano

I turn the television to one of the movie networks. I find a movie and leave it on, it's *The Graduate*. It doesn't matter what I find to watch because it's the TV that has control. The living room atmosphere seems to pour out of the television and into my mother and father's minds, like soapy water that fills an unclean pot being poured down the drain. The television has become a necessary component to our feelings. The sense of being mutually distracted, being of one mind, is within us. It is this reasonable part of human nature that imposes order in relationships. For example, the reciprocity between lovers: they give their bodies to one another and their hearts become joined together. The convenience of electronic broadcasting, the analog and digital signals, filter ideas through this very instinct—through the pineal gland. The instinct to love becomes guided by an endless stream of encoded messages. Messages which fool the senses and impose upon us representations of what we think are human beings. Our ability to relate is fooled into a mutual correspondence with the idea. The idea works on the instinct. The instinct loves the idea. The instinct is love.

It's as if we want our attention removed from reality in order to see reality for what it really is. The true reality, a movie being played over and over for the benefit of our mutual entertainment, has been accepted because we've lost the ability to genuinely

communicate. Nothing relinquishes the power of the mind more than the television, or so they say. Perhaps it's the television's permanence in our living rooms and hallways that forms the reality. Maybe we should be thanking the television—thanking it for providing this splendid living arrangement and the freedom it gives us. The emptiness and the openness, the sheer contempt for living and the opportunity to do nothing about it. Dismal, dreary, death. Happiness?

I believe in the television's ability to reflect my reality. Through its screen I see with such renewed clarity. The human quality to reflect and know is dwarfed by the electronic signals and pixels that give us our moment-to-moment reality coverage.

We yell at each other, we don't communicate. It seems my family is some kind of trap and nobody can tell me the way out except for the television set. Like some parallel world, there's always someone inside the screen playing my part.

I'm seated on a brown faded recliner facing directly towards the set. It's mounted atop a '60s style ratan coffee table. Stacks of old *TV Guides* and video tapes fill in the space not taken by the set. Usually my dad holds this position until the wee hours, listening to the endless loop of CNN news. The only reason he isn't here right now is because he just discovered that the set in one of my brothers' old rooms still works. He stays

upstairs, watching as he sinks deeper into a plush purple love seat. My younger brother and I stay downstairs watching the set from opposite sides of the room. The room seems to fold in on itself as the television becomes the primary focus. Our oracle.

As *The Graduate* begins, Dustin Hoffman stands confused and afraid, wanting out of the commitments his parents have made for him. No one understands him and I can feel myself suffocating from his sense of isolation. "Dustin Hoffman's role is the equivalent of Deniro's in *Taxi Driver*," I tell my brother without prior warning.

"What do you mean?" he asks.

"He's a detached person who can't quite put his finger on why he feels so alienated."

My brother looks back toward the set as if acknowledging my comments by becoming more interested in the film than in me. I divert my focus from the television set, standing up to go into the kitchen. I need a drink of water to wash down the biah taste of morning still inside my mouth. However, I remain aware of everything Hoffman—Benjamin Braddock—says and does.

Benjamin seems to be inside the room with us. He becomes an entity of our own parallel experiences, my thoughts unconsciously relate to his. Each word seems scripted perfectly for my every thought and petty gesture. Something is being relayed to

me but I don't know what. A hidden code sent underneath the conscious stream directly into the brainstem. Along the spine, no words are formed; no thoughts are made immediately evident. We exist in words so without them no meaning is introduced. We stand deaf to a muted idea—an incomprehensible phantom that we unknowingly allow to lurk just behind conscious thought.

Hoffman, standing in a scuba suit, reluctantly submerges himself in a swimming pool.

My dad comes down from my brother's room. He must have smelled something or thought he did. It revived him from the site to sight position—the point to point correspondence from the TV to your eyes.

There's a disturbance in the room. It lingers around the kitchen table coming down from the stairs and filling up space. I feel it. Circling so close to the ceiling you can almost see it. Like the vapor rising off a cooling tower, it resides motionless and undisturbed in space; the phantom. I can hear the creeks from the staircase echoing through the door-less arch that leads into the kitchen. Nothing is as imposing as hearing someone coming down the stairs. It ruins something. Maybe it's him, or maybe it's just something inside of me. Perhaps it's both. Perhaps it's neither. It's just the way it is.

He enters the room. He's drawn to us near the TV. The code signaling the brain-

stem and downloading deep into the spinal cord. "What is this?" he asks.

My mom says something about how he's supposed to be getting ready, but nobody hears her. She begins to shout his name from the kitchen, her volume increasing with each shout.

He finally chimes back, apparently reaching a certain threshold of audibility, "What!? What do you want?!"

"I want you to hear what I'm saying. Do you hear me?," she asks, not expecting to hear a reply.

She gets one anyway: "What? Ya, Ok, will you stop bothering me. I can't listen to you I'm trying to watch the thing, the TV."

Mrs. Robinson is manipulating Benjamin into getting them a room. Their bickering echoes what's occurring in the realm of the living. Back and forth. Hoffman's nasal resonance penetrates even the voluntarily deaf ears of my father. "Mizzsuss Rob Ins Zun, Oh no MissUz Rob In Zun."

My Mother sighs out of exhaustion exhaustion, which somehow gets my dad's attention.

It turns out he had come down only to check if the water on the stove was hot enough for his coffee yet. He becomes annoyed by my mom's piles of pots and food laid all over the surrounding kitchen counter.

"Why do you have to have all this stuff out like this? Don't you know I'm trying to have my coffee?"

She tries to be as calm about his comments as possible, "I'm trying to cook for you, it's Father's Day."

"Can I get a cup? You're blocking my way!" He responds. She moves quickly as not to risk provoking him. Benjamin lies on the bed next to Mrs. Robinson trying to get her to talk about her husband.

(The television becomes a mirrored reflection of the room—a place, where its scripts and monologues probably took their first steps. Inside houses, apartments, streets and coffee shops, writers began to interpret the world around them and write about it. For myself, I believe life is so intense that it becomes very intangible at times. Writers make life into a tangible object ready for those interested to pick up and read. The writers of *The Graduate* were pulling something out from one young man's experience—something the character himself was unaware of or unable to express to anyone. I find myself immediately captivated by the dynamic between the writers, the characters and myself. It becomes something I relate to and derive meaning from—a weird sort of fantasy game. Nonetheless, I am still immersed in reality. The world around me is being swallowed by the television.)

My mother is still in the kitchen. I can see her moving in my peripheral vision. The motionless blob beside her is my dad. He begins to pour his coffee while she moves fish cutlets and a lasagna tray out of his way. My father seems to always feel that people, even his family, are somehow threatening him. It's hard to do anything remotely nice for the guy without his immediate disregard or disapproval of your action. The entire kitchen is at his disposal with all of its food and its tedious preparation and he only wants his coffee.

It isn't even real coffee. It's some sort of processed granular crystals that contain no caffeine whatsoever. He can't ingest caffeine because it makes him "nervous"—his words. I'd say the caffeine speeds up his already very prominent anxiety disorder so that instead of experiencing his bullshit at a moderate level throughout the entire day, we get a full day in less than four hours.

Benjamin has gone out on his first date with the Robinson's daughter. He had been forced into it and found it awkward because of his affair with her mother.

My mother opens the oven to bake the cod filets. She inserts the tray of fish, which, of course, simultaneously upsets my father. "What are you doing? Look what you made me do, I spilled my coffee!"

"I have to cook the fish."

"Why do you have to make so much fuck-

ing food for today? Just make one thing, that's all! Why are you making so much?" He says this to her like she hasn't anything else to do but to listen to his endless crap. Meanwhile, in his mind he doesn't care. He just wants to do what he wants to do and he'll bitch about anything that stops him from doing just that.

Benjamin Braddock, confines himself to the pool area, adrift on a raft made of plastic. He's either submerged or adrift, trying to make sense out of rules "that seem to make themselves up." In today's world, no one seems fit enough to figure out life's little ambiguities. Everything is assumed rather than challenged.

My mother stands in the kitchen in her night dress murmuring about husbands and children and sighing from her exhaustion.

"I can't just make one thing."

He turns his attention to my brother and I. "Do you know a girl named Holly? Her mother called looking for her and I said I didn't know where she was."

I don't know why he had to come over here and start this third-degree bullshit. He always has to do this and it's not like he's trying to get some specific information. He conjures new sins every day for me to commit, taking pleasure from watching me squirm. It's a ridiculous life some people make for themselves.

Benjamin moves about the party not sure of what to say to his parents friends.

"Are these my friends?" he wonders. I can feel the strain which saps his strength, the inability to relate to anyone, the nauseous swell inside the mind. Familiar faces at a party—is this what adulthood has become? As we realize we didn't send the invitations, prepare the house, arrange for the decorations, bake the cake, or even make the friends, it becomes clearer. What are we becoming?

My father moves away from the TV. I think about my mother and begin to feel very disconnected from them both.

I get up from the recliner and walk over to the kitchen. I lean against the solid blue-turquoise plane of the countertop. I survey the remains of activity, which show all the signs of why I'm feeling the way I do. Isn't this what families have become? The source of our disabilities, the place we find our emotional stone etchings fossilized and buried. The kitchen is the life center inside the house where everyone has to finally come. I look across the stove where the red glowing light of the burner tells me someone has been there. My mother has gone back upstairs to get ready for church and my dad has gone outside.

With both of them gone, I can begin to feel my place inside the house—inside this family. I know they'll be back and I know it'll be just another mess. Orange peels and coffee grounds inside the sink; everything so passive and rotting. ©

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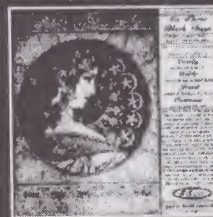
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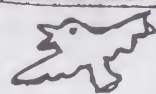


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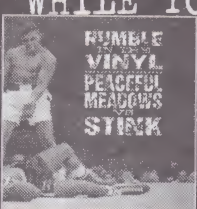
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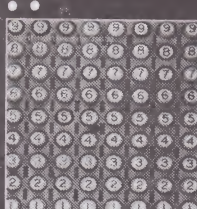
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Defend Yourself! A DIY guide to self defense

By Molly Brodak

If you have never had the experience of getting your ass kicked, consider yourself lucky. It's not fun. Fighting can be a very messy business. Besides the physical pain, broken bones and black eyes, there is also the humiliation and embarrassment that comes from being attacked. As any victim can tell you, the psychological scars last much longer than the physical ones. It shouldn't be any revelation that you're better off avoiding physical conflict.

The purpose of this article is to help prevent you from getting into violent situations. This is not "How to be a Ninja." You are the *defense*, not the *offense*. Self-defense means that you take your cues from your aggressor. But that doesn't mean punching someone in the face because they stepped on your toe. It means that in order to get yourself out of a messy situation, your mind—not your emotions—must be in control. It can be hard to restrain yourself when someone is brutally insulting you or when you feel intimidated. But keep in mind that *your brain* is your best weapon. Thinking clearly and reacting appropriately can be the difference between peace and having to pick up your missing teeth from the pavement.

Just recently, I was at a self-defense workshop that was set up through my college. Not surprisingly, everyone in attendance was female. Someone in the audience asked, "How do I defend myself against someone who is two feet taller and one hundred pounds heavier than me?" She didn't understand how to stand up to someone who is much stronger. The idea is that if you are lacking in brute strength, you must use your head. Although it's true that strength and stamina *do* help in violent situations, they aren't necessary. In fact, plain old common sense can be just as effective. So don't skip over this article just because you think you won't be able to defend yourself—the only way you can't defend yourself is if you don't know how.

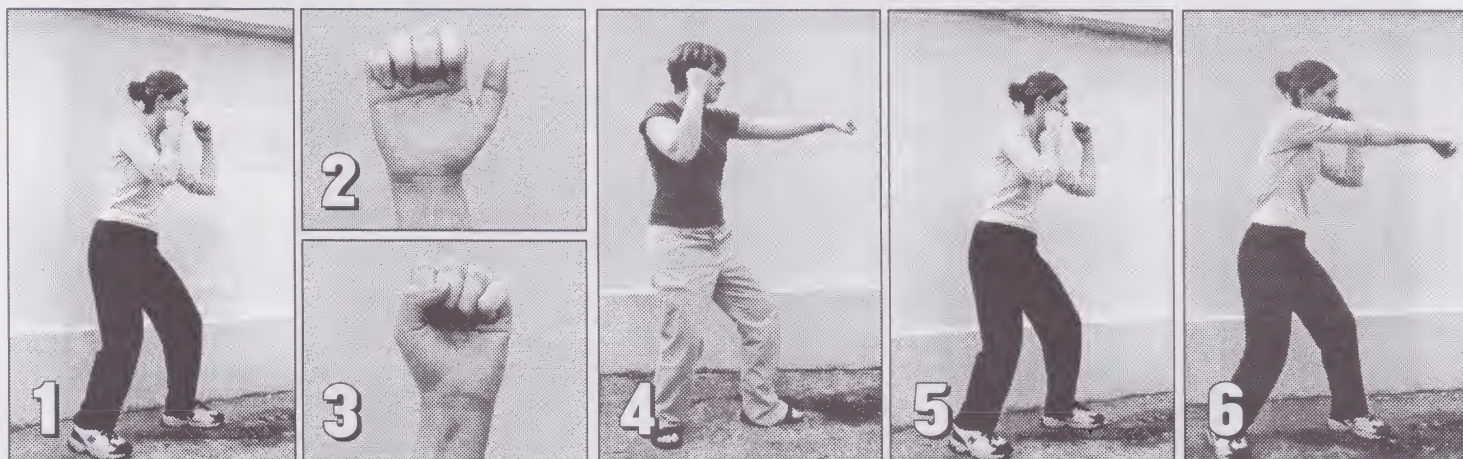
Ten Steps to Self-Defense

1. **Your best defense against an attack is to simply not be there.** This is the number one most important rule! It means preventing yourself from getting into dangerous situations. *Always* be aware of your surroundings (Have you ever noticed that intoxicated kids end up being victims more often than the sober ones do?). I know it sounds maternal, but be mindful of where you go, who you're with and how you act. Don't throw rocks at trucks when the drivers might be armed. No matter how tough you think you are, you have to realize that there is always going to be someone a little bit bigger and meaner than you are.

This also means that when you are confronted with a potentially violent situation, the best possible thing you can do for yourself is to walk away from it. Run if you have to. If you choose to fight someone, you have to realize that you're taking a huge risk. You might beat their ass but you might also get seriously injured. The sooner you stop the fight, the less chance you have of getting hurt. It might wound your ego a little to walk away from someone who antagonizes you, but you're going to hurt a lot more if you don't.

2. **If you feel unsafe, you probably are.** Don't ignore your gut feelings. Trust your instincts.

3. **If someone is harassing you, don't escalate the situation. End It.** For example: You are being followed and there is no safe place for you to immediately go. The best thing to do is to appear less vulnerable. Pick your head up and walk down that street like you own it. Turn around and look at the person following you. Make eye contact. Let them know that you're aware of them and that you aren't scared. Make other people around you aware of what's going on. Yell, but don't escalate the situation by saying antagonistic things. By attacking the



actions, and not the person, you're less likely to piss them off. Yell, "Stop following me!" not, "Stop following me, you fucking weirdo!" You do not want conflict with this person. Insulting them will only increase their desire to attack you.

4. **If they have a gun, DON'T TRY TO FIGHT THEM.** Do whatever they want. There is nothing you can do to stop a bullet.

5. **If they have another kind of weapon**, such as a knife, realize that regardless of how good of a fighter you may be, you're still at a disadvantage. Even if you have a weapon, your attacker already has his pointing at you. Don't try and reach for it. Walk away.

6. **If you have a weapon yourself**, don't be completely dependent on it because it doesn't automatically make you invincible. What would you do if you fumbled and dropped your can of mace? What would you do if your attacker disarmed you? Use your head. Your brain is always your own best resource.

7. **If you have to do it, do it right.** Despite all of the precautions you've taken to avoid conflict, your aggressor starts swinging and you're forced to fight. Please remember that self-defense can get you hurt if you don't do it right! As if it wasn't bad enough that someone else is trying to hurt you, you might break your toes trying to kick them! Improperly punching someone will not only be ineffective, it will also break your wrist or fingers. Don't assume you can look at the pictures in this article and just go ahead and take on the world. Practice them on your own or with your friends—just remember to be gentle.

8. **Size really doesn't matter.** Every attacker has weak spots. This means that you can always successfully defend yourself, even if your attacker is three feet taller than you are.

9. **Eyes, throat, groin, and shins.** Repeat after me: *Eyes, throat, groin and shins. Eyes, throat, groin, and shins. Eyes, throat, groin, and shins.* These are the weakest spots on anyone's body. Striking one of these spots can disable your attacker. So if, in a panic, you forget everything and just start mindlessly flailing your limbs, try to flail towards these spots.

10. **Make every move count.** Every move that you make should have one of two purposes: a defense or an attack. But no matter what, every move should go towards ending the fight, not continuing it. When your well-being is jeopardized, there is no time to waste on showing off or trying to talk them out of it. Instead of taking the time to figure out how to distract your assailant so you can tie their shoelaces together, focus on how you can use their movement to your advantage. Their weight shifts or perhaps the fact that their arm is sticking out might give you a fleeting opportunity to bring them down. Don't waste it.

The Moves

Now we're really getting down to it. Just how does one go about 'taking someone down?' That's up to you. But here are some basics that you can use to build off of. Don't get frightened off by the idea of having to memorize the more complex moves. Once your body gets accustomed to these positions, the more likely you will be to naturally fall into them when a bad situation arises.

Fighting stance

This stance [photo 1] is the springboard for all of the following moves. If you are right handed, put your left foot forward with your feet shoulder length apart and bend your knees (switch if left-handed). Shift your hips so that they are almost completely



turned away from your opponent. This gives your body less surface area to be attacked. Bend your elbows and put your left fist six inches in front of your face. Your other fist should be about four inches from the side of your head, protecting your face. Tuck your elbows in slightly to protect your ribs. Make sure both your fists face inward.

Punches

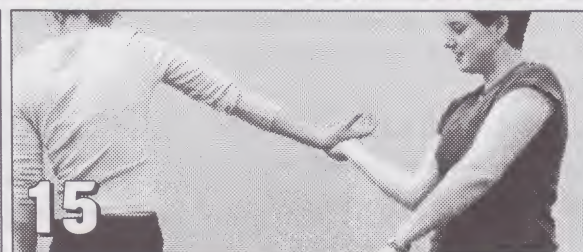
Making a fist

Try to tuck the tips of your fingers as much as you can into the insides of your lower knuckles. [photo 2] (This doesn't work really well if you have long fingernails.) Then bend your hand into a fist and put your thumb across the middle section of your fingers, bent so that it runs parallel to your wrist. [photo 3] The part of your fist that makes contact with your target is the flat area between your two lower most sets of knuckles.

The jab

There are two basic types of punches: One that comes off of your front arm, and one that comes off of your back arm.

In karate as well as in boxing, a front-arm punch is called a *jab*. To do it, stand in the basic position. Without moving any other part of your body except your forearm, extend your arm to your target, keeping your fist sideways. [photo 4] In the split second before you reach your target, snap your wrist over so your fingers point to the ground. This little added motion adds bite to your punch. Lock your wrist so it's straight. Jabs are not supposed to be powerful punches. They are meant to be very fast, taking only a few seconds to complete. If you jab someone in the face, it will knock them off guard enough so that they will not see a more powerful punch coming.



The back hand punch

There are many variations of this punch, but the basic straight punch is the simplest. Using the arm that is not in front, extend your arm and lock your wrist. [photo 5] At the same time, twist your hips and use the power in your lower body to extend your punch. [photo 6] Do not reach over your stance! You want to remain balanced at all times. Don't reach back or 'wind up' before doing this punch, as it serves no purpose (since the power comes from your hips) and it gives your opponent an obvious clue that you are about to strike them. This punch is slower and much more powerful than the jab. It is usually used for punches to the stomach, neck, or chin.

How to kick

The front kick

I don't know any other name for this kick except for the one that we use in Ashihara karate, the *mai gari*. This kick has the same purpose that the jab has, which is to be fast and light. Shift your weight to your back leg and lift your lower front leg up under you. [photo 7] From this position, snap your lower leg out at your opponent. [photo 8] Keep your toes bent down! You want the top of your foot to hit your target. This is a great kick for the groin.

The back kick

This kick is a lot more powerful than the *mai gari* because it comes off of your back leg. Lift your back leg up underneath yourself so that your foot almost touches your butt. [photo 9] Keeping your leg tucked, turn your body so that now your back hip is forward and your forward hip is in back. [photo 10] This shift of weight from your hips gives you the power in this kick. Snap your

leg out to your opponent, keeping your toes up. [photo 11] Because this kick is higher, you should use the bottom of your foot. Your foot should hit your opponent at a 45-degree angle with the floor.

Blocks and Defenses

Blocking a punch

If someone tries to punch you, don't do anything ridiculous like try to grab his or her fist. What you should do is try to deflect their punch off of your forearm. As they are punching you, *move out of the way*. All you have to do is shift just a little bit to your left or right, but make sure you are shifting to the outside of their punch. As you shift, use your front arm to deflect the punch. Make a circular motion in the air, and let their forearm slide off of yours. [photo 12]

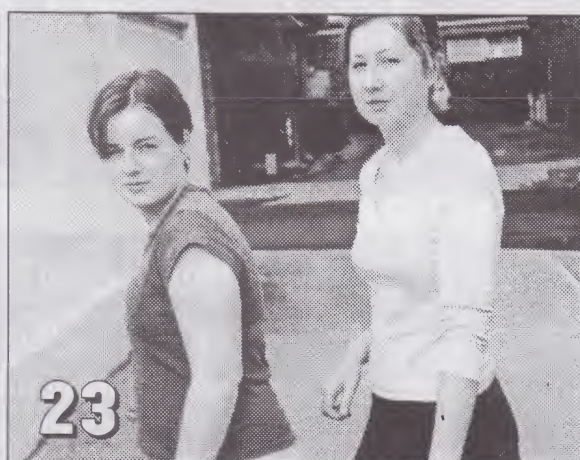
Another thing you could do at this point (which I don't recommend unless you are a strong person) is to put your hand down on their wrist and grab it hard. Pull their arm straight. Using your other arm, snap their elbow backwards. [photo 13]

Defense against wrist or shoulder grab

If someone tries to grab your wrist and pull you somewhere, it's the perfect opportunity for a groin kick, but this move works well also, especially if they only grab one wrist. Using your free hand, grab the outside of their hand firmly. [photo 14] Twist their arm and get behind them. [photo 15] Now you can kick them down and run for the hills. This move also works with a shoulder grab.

Defense against headlock

A headlock is a very bad position to find yourself in. [photo 16] When someone has control over your head, they have control over



your entire body. Make every effort to avoid getting in this position. But if you you're stuck there, try this:

Using the arm that's behind your attacker's body, reach up and grab their chin or nose. Pull back on their head, and at the same time, stick your knee into the back of their knee and push forward. **[photo 17]** They should lose their balance and fall backward, so make sure you get out of their way.

Defense against the "let's go, tough guy" shirt grab

If your opponent is pulling you towards them **[photo 18]** and you don't have enough space to kick or punch, think elbows and knees. They work well for tight spots.

Put your right hand up through the middle of their arms and grab the outer part of their right hand. **[photo 19]** Twist and try to get your body behind theirs. **[photo 20]** You have them in control now, so kick their knees in and make them say they're sorry.

Defense against bear hug (arms in)

A bear hug may seem like an impossible situation to get out of. **[photo 21]** You have to try this move to believe that it actually works. The harder the person is holding you, the better this move works. Just drop your body by bending your knees a little **[photo 22]** and twist your body fast so that you kind of flick them off

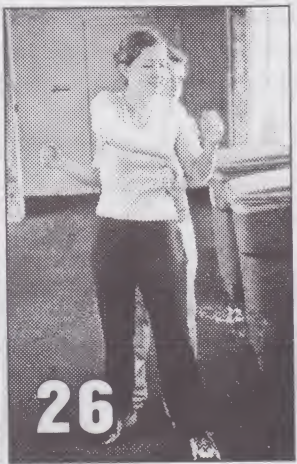
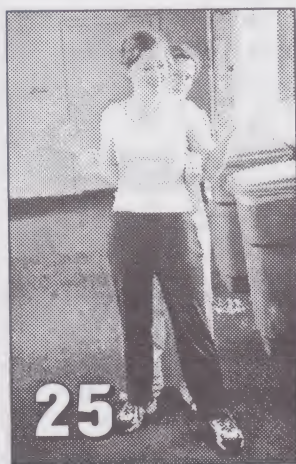
[photo 23] (of course, in reality your attacker would be falling, not standing there looking at the camera). I've seen little 100 pound girls make huge, burly men fly across the room in doing this move. It's all in the momentum!

Defense against bear hug (arms out)

If someone has got you around the waist and your arms are free, try this move:

Using your middle finger knuckles, knock their hands hard directly in the center. **[photo 24]** This should loosen their grip a considerable amount, but if they are still holding on, thrust your elbows back into the insides of theirs and their hands will have to come apart. **[photo 25]** Grab their left hand with your right one (or vice versa), gripping the outer part. **[photo 26]** Pull yourself under their arm, still holding their hand. **[photo 27]** This motion will twist their arm and you'll have control over them.

Remember that these moves are only to be used in a case of absolute emergency. By using your intelligence instead of your emotions to work through ugly situations, you too can do your part in keeping the peace. ☺



from L to R: Sam, Kimi (photos) and me. Melanie went back to bed. Thanks girls!

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fuck work

by Srini Kumar



"At least I'm fucking TRYING! What the FUCK have YOU done?" screamed a teenage Ian MacKaye on the record that kicked off American punk rock in the '80s. If there's a single quality that punk embodies, it's the one of *trying*. It was that spirit that informed me and probably most of you reading this article as well. We've all tried our hand at different projects. These projects—bands, labels, zines, venues, coffeehouses, whatever—are some of the coolest things I've ever experienced and have all been created by industrious punk rockers who valued loud amps and freedom over dollars.

While the rest of America turned into a low-est-common-denominator hell of mini-malls, cable TV and sport-utility vehicles, punks (and their comrades in all of the edge scenes) have benefited from healthy social interaction, deep and simple ideas, unforgettable art, and the most fucking amazing music you ever heard. They had Rambo, we had Operation Ivy. We've been blessed with a better cultural standard of living, but for the most part, we punks are broke! We haven't had the resources that we need in order to truly rebuild this world, forcing us to work for The Man.

This doesn't have to be the case. For some of us, it already isn't. Punks can own their own businesses and work for themselves—or employ other punks. There are punks who make a living making music and there are punks who sell their services to the square world in order to start some shit with their savings and experience. There are even punks that sell their services directly to the punk world. All of these punk entrepreneurs are experiencing freedom. *Freedom is owning your own ass.*

There is a punk economy that lies parallel to the mainstream economy. In this column, I hope to provide a resource in helping to understand and take advantage of the punk economy. I will be spotlighting punk business that are taking the squares head-on in the hopes of inspiring all of you to start your own, as well as to give advice and inspiration to those of us that already have.

The world of punk business is out there for the taking. It's just a matter of finding your niche. We all know that for every mainstream business or activity, there exists the possibility for a punk version. Punk hockey? It works! Punk movies? *Ruling!* Punk advertising? This 'zine is *lousy* with it! Punk wedding rings? Hmmmm.... Let me tell you a little story.

And a Ring Shall Set You Free A Peek into the World of Crafts

I just proposed to my girlfriend at a party that takes place every so often on a boat. We had been talking about getting married for a couple months, but to make a long story short, I surprised her. I didn't have a ring ready or anything, but check this out: The hip stranger sitting next to Robynn as I got on bended knee was a *ringmaker*.

Tracy Rose makes rings for a living. She's been doing it for eleven years now. At 26, Tracy makes a tidy living making custom rings for, well, people who need rings and appreciate good art. Her title is "conceptual jeweler." When I asked her what that meant, she simply replied, "I get to fuck around a lot." Pretty punk.

Tracy is her own boss. "I couldn't do it any other way. There's no going back," she confides. "Once I made it through the first year—and it was tough, that much is true—every year has gotten easier and easier."

As Tracy has learned, quitting your job and starting your own business is a gutsy move, but stick to your guns and you'll discover the same freedom she has. In my opinion, the majority of businesses who manage to struggle through the first year stick around for the long haul.

Owning her own business gives Tracy artistic freedom as well. "In a corporate ring factory—for instance, Zales or Kay Jewelers—the jeweler sits in a sweatshop with twelve others, and they just bark orders at you: 'style 231-B, size 5, tear-shaped emerald stone.' There's no room for creativity at all!" Tracy explains. "As my own boss, my entire business depends on my creativity. I don't do the same things as the corporates, but lucky for me there are a *lot* of people that don't want a corporate ring when they're getting married! They *want* me to retain my artistic freedom—they *trust* me as the artist." Again: *freedom*.

After becoming established in Washington DC, Tracy has recently uprooted and moved to San Francisco. While she had more clients than she could handle in DC, her move means she has to start building up a customer base more or less scratch. Her plan of action includes a lot of partying ("I've always gotten business through my social life") and the Internet ("Tracyrose.com is my future!") to whip up business. Catch that lesson, punks: when you own a craft-based business, you can get paid for going to shows!

It hasn't always been beer and skittles for Tracy, but it has been quite an adventure. "I used to peek at the windows of these totally posh jewelry stores and think 'I'd *kill* to get my work in there.' But now it's just like 'Eh, I'll get in there for sure!'"

The only path to that kind of confidence is trial and error—with an emphasis on *error*. Mistakes build character and it's that character that brings you the confidence to truly succeed. "Confidence helps your customers believe you can do the job," explains Tracy.

So there you have it. Starting a craft project can be as simple as buying a screenprinting kit and doing up some canvas patches, or as complicated as writing a piece of crazy useful software—it's all a reflection of your interests and your ability to *do what others haven't*. All you have to do is choose a craft, get good at it, and kick some System ass as your business grows. And I bet you this isn't the last you've heard about Tracy Rose, Ringmaker. ©

the boom bap

by Davey G



So what gives? Another column by another loud mouth? Precisely, my friend.

However, we're trying to make things tricky here at Punk Planet and try out this whole "interactive" deal there was so much talk about in the "liberal media" a couple of years ago. Why is this column separated from the other ones? Those people have original ideas. As for me, I am almost totally dependent on you, the reader, to make my job easy enough for me to handle.

Here's the deal: This column will be about audio. Every issue, I'll bore the pants off you for a paragraph or two about something I think you should know more about and then I'll try and help address a couple of acoustically-related issues that people have sent in. So, as they say, therein lies the rub. Reader participation is key. Either by e-mail or regular ol' US post (if you do use the mail please, I beseech you, send me postcards! I love 'em. The more cornball the better), send me your diagrams, questions, problems, issues, what ever. As long as it relates to sound and/or the reproduction of sound, we can use it.

How am I qualified in any way to write this column? First off, I am a know it all. Secondly, as a know it all, I actually *don't*. But I am aware of my limits and am willing to bug actual smart people into providing factual information. Theoretically, I will pass the information along in a manner that contains a semblance of sense. Thirdly, I love a parade. And finally, well, Dan asked me. And oh yeah, I record bands for a sort of living. So there we go.

This issue, we obviously have no questions to answer and I decided that making them up was a complete affront to you, the reader. So where does that leave us? Well, I'm past deadline and we've got space to fill so this issue I've gotta go with something I'm kinda familiar with: smoked meats. And recording. Actually, it's the first part of a column on getting ready to record. Smoked meats don't really fit into preparing to record, unless you want them to. I want them to. I can't stop thinking about 'em. I got a big ol' smoked turkey for the holidays and man-oh-man is it tasty. Plus Slim Jims or whatever sort of "jerky" brand product you dig are the perfect recording studio snack.

Gettin' Ready to Lay Down Tracks Part One

You're thinking it's time to record. Whatever chain of events have transpired, you're at the point where it's time to commit your band's material—or a selection thereof—to a more permanent record than your memory and a more reliable and aesthetically opportune storage medium than a Dictaphone tape. Where to begin.

The Budget

This is an essential starting place. Even if the recording bill is paid by somebody else (a label or pimp), you are paying for this recording. Maybe not now, maybe never in actual greenbacks, but trust me: You are paying for your recording. Before you do anything else, determine how much you can afford to spend on the project. Make sure that you factor every aspect of the process in: studio time, engineering fees (these two are often lumped together by those thoughtful studio owner folk), tape costs, guitar strings, drum heads, any rentals, duct tape, picks, smoked meats, travel expenses, etc.

Be honest with yourself and do not make the mistake of getting into a situation that you cannot afford. This is neither good for you nor the person/facility you are working with. It can come out two ways: You stiff on your bill and are guaranteed a spot next to an insurance lawyer on the mini-bus to purgatory only after a lifetime obsessed with dodging a certain very pissed off individual who you owe money and therefore spend an inordinate amount of time sapped with dread and guilt. Or, you end up dragging the recording process out over a ridiculously long time, doing what you can afford piece by piece. This can work out for some folks, but they are the few and the hardy. I am in the midst of a session that has seen about a week of dates spread out over a year and I'll be damned that if the ball hasn't completely stopped rolling, it's rolling at a glacial pace. For the most part though, these projects never get finished. The band breaks up, either because of, or around, the issue of recording and everyone winds up hating each other. Be realistic. Figure out what you can spend and spend it.

As for the situation when a label or other organization/individual is "fronting" you the money to record, the budget issue gets mildly complicated. I will not attempt to dig too deeply into the murky, acrid and musty pickle barrel that are recording "agreements" (contractual and otherwise) and their subsequent obligations. Let us say simply that you and your benefactor must be completely informed of each others intentions. Clearly agree upon a budget and through whatever means you feel comfortable with reach a very certain and agreed upon confirmation of this mutual understanding. I know I sound like an asshole here, but make sure dollar figures are clearly discussed and schedules of payment are arranged. It's really easy to cop out of the "big" meeting with lots of vague nods and half assurances. A little interpersonal discomfort does the body good. Get things straight and get 'em out in the open. It will be for the best.

To DIY or Not to DIY

So you've got the money sorted out, now you can decide how to make it redistribute itself. You've got a bunch of options. The most primary one being whether to record it yourself or go to a studio.

Home recording can be a tremendously enriching experience and many fine records have been made by folks storming away in the basement. That said, home recording should not be looked at as a way to save money—you won't. If you factor all your costs and your labor, it will be cheaper to pay someone else to do it. Of course there are exceptions to this, but they are rarer than tastefully done ice sculptures. Get into home recording because you are passionate about it as a hobby and a craft and for no other reason.

An exaggerated but telling example that I hope illustrates something other than economies of scale: A friend of mine is currently engineering a record for a rapidly approaching-middle-age and past-break-even-point major label band. They have decided (along with their label) that they are gonna record this record themselves, "save a bunch of money," go out to L.A., snort copious amounts of cocaine and have a superstar mix down guy polish this turd into (fingers crossed) gold for them at a ghastly rate. So far they have spent approx. \$20,000 on gear that guarantees them really shitty sounds. They have already spent so much more money than almost anyone reading this article probably will ever have a chance to on a record that not one song has been actually recorded for. In the end, I assume they will go on to spend three to four times that, between their gear and finding people who can actually operate it competently and make it "magic." Does this seem like a waste to you? That total budget could maybe just about build the sort of facility (excluding real estate) that you can record in for several hundred dollars a day including capable professional engineering. By using this absurd and grandiose example, I am merely stating that a day of recording may seem expensive but in many cases is really reasonable. Find a good situation with an adequately equipped and designed facility that you are comfortable in and go from there.

I am not trying to diss your own recordings. Not in the least. I am merely trying to dispel a common mythology about "home" (loosely used) recording. For many people it is a preferred means of documenting their work and the results can be truly wonderful. However, do it for the right reason. Do it because process *means* something to you and not because it is "cheap."

I was struck by what an acquaintance of mine said to me after making the jump from a cassette four-track to building a home studio. He sold it all after a year or so. When I asked him why he got rid of his gear and dismantled his studio—especially considering the pretty decent quality of his stuff—he told me he decided that there were certain things he would rather pay other people to do. He said it took over his life, drained his bank account and in the end always felt disappointed by the results.

To counter that, I have a number of former clients who've created their own spaces, made their own records and completed work that may not be as technically adroit as those done at a commercial facility, but are more artistically successful and were more personally fulfilling than would have been possible had they recorded with me.

Next issue I'll talk about ways to find the right engineer and studio for your budget and some simple preparations you and your bandmates can make before you get into the studio that will help save you money and make a recording that more accurately fulfills your expectations.

Parting Shots

Since it's my column I feel like I can force a few totally unrelated things on you:

1) *Tape Op* magazine. This is a pretty great little magazine that focuses on "creative recording" (i.e. lots of interesting non-commercially-driven recording related content.) If you do any recording at home or elsewhere else it's a cool resource and a fine bathroom read. Subscriptions are free and you can reach them at their web site: www.teleport.com/~fboa/tapeop.html or simply mail them a subscription request and your address to *Tape Op* c/o Substance Mediaworks, PO Box 507, Sacramento, CA 95812

2) My friend Derek is totally convinced that "good" metal, as in the slow and low, is in a state of glorious renaissance. He points to the brand new Sleep album and many Man's Ruin releases as proof. He also enjoys marijuana.

3) What's up with your speakers, punk rocker? Think about it. Do they make sense? You listen to music all the time, but one speaker is in the corner on the floor and the other is on its side up on a shelf towards the middle of the room. Pointing them towards where you listen and placing them at the same height and the same distance from said listening space will make a world of difference.

Plus, make sure that the wire attached to the red connector at the stereo goes to the red connector on the speaker, likewise for the black one. That insures that the loud speaker is "in phase." If your speaker is out of phase, the difference between what you hear and what you are supposed to be hearing is substantial and will hinder your rocking.

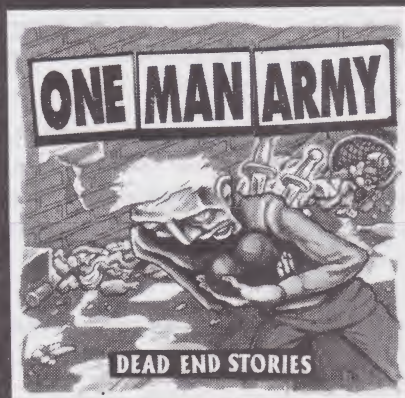
That's all I got. Write in with some audio related questions so there is less boring and inane chatter from me. You can totally dictate the content of this column, so do it. ☺

Send your audio questions to Davey G at:

Punk Planet attn: The Boom Bap PO Box 464 Chicago, IL 60690

Or e-mail Davey directly at: daveygee@yahoo.com

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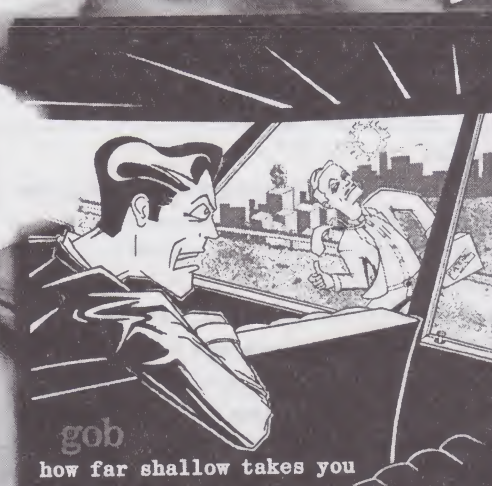
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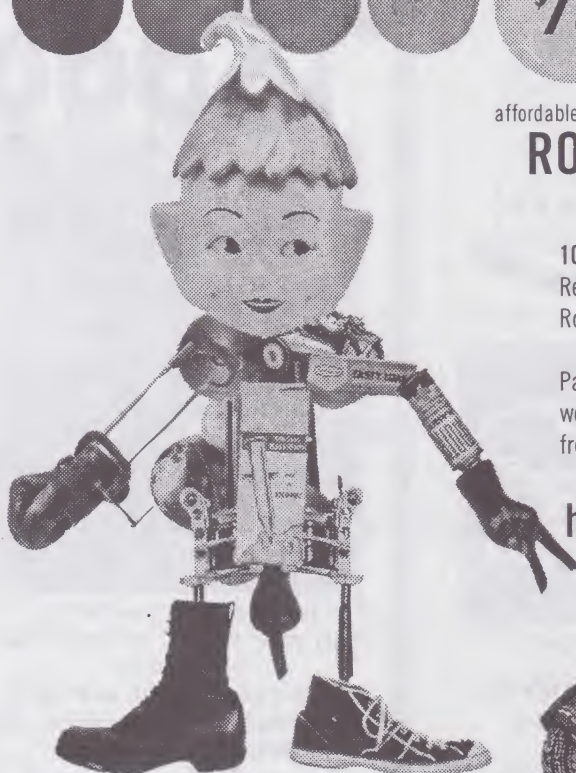


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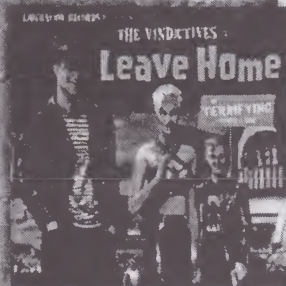
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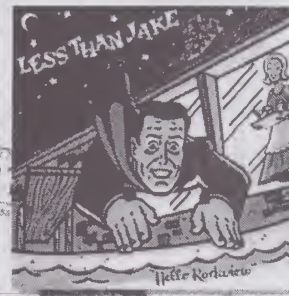
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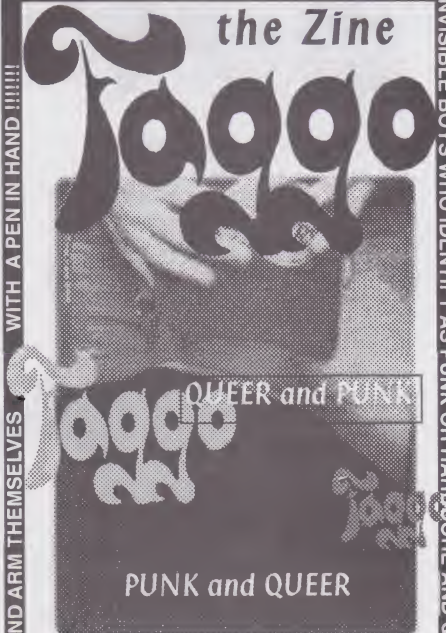
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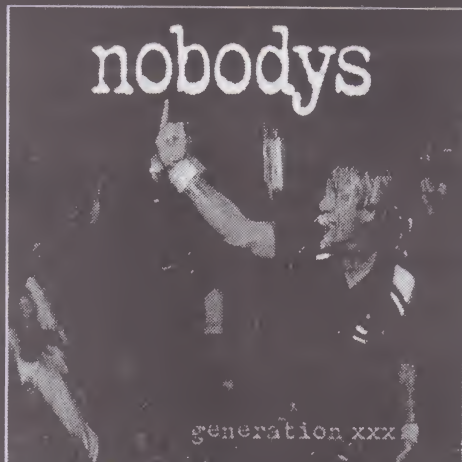
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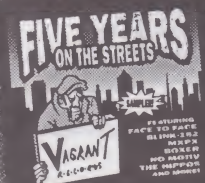
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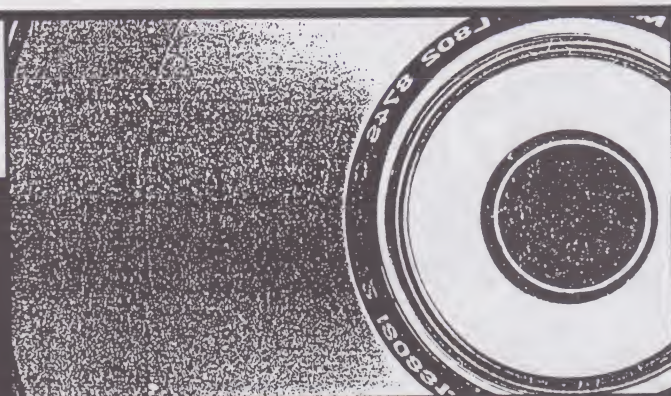
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PLASTIC MUSIC



I6 - SCOTT CASE, (OUT OF PRINT MATERIAL) CD Hmm. Sort of heavy metal sounding punk type stuff with angry, screamed vocals. Picture of a guy with like 50 cigarettes in his mouth on the cover and a picture of a guy getting two bottles of liquor poured down his throat on the inside. Pretty cool huh? (JK)

Pessimiser Records, PO box 1070 Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

ACREDINE - S/T, MCD 12 minutes and 5 songs of old school spirit. I am reminded of Kevin Seconds vocally. The music is driving with some great break downs. I only wish good bands still came this easily in the U.S. There is no problem with the shortness of this recording because I just press repeat and listen to it over and over again. (SY)
Vacation House Records, Via S.Michele 56 13856 Vigliano Biellese ITALY

THE ADVERTS - THE BEST OF THE ADVERTS, CD So many 1977 style discographies are coming out in the last year that I can't keep them straight. The nice thing is that after the first 15 to 20 minutes you normally heard the best songs and can be happy. This disc is just the case. I love my three Adverts singles and "One Chord Wonders" may be reason enough for you to go get the Stiff Records box set, but a "best of" ??? If you don't own a turntable and need to hear the Adverts, then this is a good disc to pick up, but be warned after the first few songs this disc loses its speed. (EA)

Anagram Records, England

ANN BERETTA/SPRAY PAINT - SPLIT 7" Both bands cover much ground in the Japanese field of rock and roll dreams. Everything from Acoustic to plugged in. (BC)
Snuffy Smile c/o Yoichi Eimori 4-24-4-302 Daizawa, Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo 155 Japan

ASSHOLE PARADE/PALATKA - NETWORK OF FRIENDS PROJECT 2, LP The best Asshole Parade recording ever. Palatka also leave all shabbiness behind. The import version of this LP came out a year ago but now it is out domestically at a cheaper price. This record rocks from start to finish. I always start with the Asshole Parade side. A sample from "Dazed And Confused" starts it out. Asshole Parade are always in touch with what is relevant and not all the songs are about weed. Listen to that side a couple times until you are ready to flip over to Palatka. Crazed hardcore with lots of high guitar. Fast and furious, this band is anything but

straight forward. I listen to this side a couple times and then flip the record again. A great place to start in the encyclopedia of hardcore. (SY)

Belladonna Records, PO Box 13673, Gainesville, FL 32604

THE BANANAS - FORBIDDEN FRUIT, CD Yellow. How much more yellow could this cover be? And the answer is none more yellow. From the goofy bunch at Plan-it X Records comes this slab of funny and messy garage punk. You could say that this is all crap, but then you would be missing the point. In a world of polished up punk, it is very refreshing to hear some music that sounds bad in a good way. The way that the Dead Milkmen where when they started out. The way that we all are, until we start to get good and worry about sales and profits and opening for bands on Fat and all that stupid shit. Have some fun and eat a Banana. (BC)

Plan-it-X Records 5810 W. Willis rd. Georgetown, IN. 47122

BEN GRIM - MUK, CD I am prone to place pop punk in the same category as country western in terms of being remotely listenable. In other words, I cannot listen to pop punk without wishing I had been born deaf. Ben Grim has opted flood my review pile this time around with exactly the style of music I have a hard time being in the same room as. I have never been capable of seeing what so many other people find appealing in this music. However, if a comparison is what the readers would like, I would say that Ben Grim sounds like All, era "Allroy Says". (BR)

Lampin' Room. P.O. Box 467, Neenah, WI 54957-0467

BEN GRIM - KING SIZE SPECIAL, 7" Simple, driving, catchy, punk that rocks pretty damn hard. Side B with Rev. Norb is in itself worth the price of this record. Get it. (MD)

Gumshoe Records 5500 Prytania St. box #133 new Orleans, la 70115

BLACKLISTED - S/T, 7" From the beginning, there was little to save this record from becoming another that is soon forgotten. The bad recording, coupled with the generic garage style punk rock, had no way of catching me off guard, although I kind of hoped it might. Maybe the cover of Black Flag's "Nervous Breakdown" is the reason behind this small hope but it was quick to

become a let down due to the lackluster to one of punk rock's greatest bands of all time. (BR)

King Fetus Records, 406 Caple Ave., Fairdale, KY 40118

BOILING MAN - I'D WATCH YOU DIE, 7" Leather, bristles and studs-style punk rock. 3-chord heavy guitars, some good melodic leads, and raw vocals. A killer 5-song blast of angry punk rock. (MH)

Ice PO Box 422965 San Francisco CA 94142-2965

BOROSITES / NIKKI THE SPRINKLER - SPLIT, 7" This is what happens when Rev. Norb and Nikki Parasite sit around one night and drink too much. Both the Parasites and Boris the Sprinkler swap singers and re-write lyrics to one of each others songs and do a cover each to boot. I don't like Norb singing slow and singing in the Parasites style. It is much more fun to hear Nikki try to do the speed of Norb and make up stupid rhymes. You already have gotten this if you ever will. (EA)

Just Add Water PO Box 420661 San Francisco, CA 94142

BRAID / BURNING AIRLINES - SPLIT, 7" Braid is doing "Always Something There to Remind Me" and I had to check the speed four times to realize that they slooooooowed down the song on purpose. It is painfully slow, I can't take it. Ahhhhh. Burning Airlines (ex-Jawbox) do a fine cover of an Echo and the Bunnymen song I have never heard, though the woman in the room recognizes it and says they did it well. It sounds like a Jawbox song to me. (EA)

Desoto Records PO Box 60335 WDC 20039

BROTHER RUSSELL - FILLED!, CD I had no idea what this was when I first received it and was ready to give it away to my pal named Russell. And then upon listening to this CD in its entirety, I realized what was missing in my life. Brother Russell helped me to fill that spiritual void, cleanse my soul. Brother Russell and his ministry can save you too. Yield to vinyl Communications today for 17 1/2 minutes of some pretty hilarious shit. Recorded conversations between antagonist and protagonist that will brighten your day 100%. (PK)

Vinyl Communications, PO Box 8623, Chula Vista CA, 91912

THE BUDDYREVELLES - SEPTEMBER, NOVEMBER, CD There is good mellow, and bad mellow. I think these guys sort of float in a sort of strange limbo between these two realms of existence. Like a sweetly blowing field of grass in a summer breeze, this band is nice enough to look at, but nothing to really get excited about. I'm not really sure if you would call this sort of stuff pop or "emo" or what, but either way it didn't do much for me. (JK)

Motorcoat Records 1818 Sherwood dr. Beloit WI 53511

BUCKMINSTER FUZEBOARD-HOW TO MAKE C60 BR24 IN UNDER AN HOUR Dubalicious! B-F serve up some piping hot loops & dub DIY style. Legions of people would tell you that this isn't punk. I say they're wrong. Who needs a band when the beat just goes? (DS)

Team Slabco 1626 21st Ave. Seattle WA 98122

THE BULEMICS - YOUR MAN'S GONNA DIE TONIGHT, 7" For some reason, this band reminds me of the Misfits. I cannot pinpoint the reason because the Misfits were far superior to most bands, period. The Bulemics do not have any traits that I find unusual enough to warrant a good review. There are two tracks on here that seem to have a horror movie-esque theme but I cannot see this being something that garners The Bulemics a large audience in this age of pop punk overkill. (BR)

Junk Records, P.O. Box 1474, Cypress, CA 90630

THE BUTCHIES-ARE WE NOT FEMME? CD For those of you that news of Team Dresch's demise has left a gaping hole in your CD tower, fill it with The Butchies. The fact that The Butchies have a sound uncannily similar to Team Dresch is explained by the presence of ex-Tders Kaia and Melissa (also of the Vegas Beat if I'm not mistaken). However, The Butcies take TD's signature sound of powerful guitar mixed with fragile yet strong vocals and makes it their own. Well worth seeking out & picking up. (DS)

Mr. Lady PO Box 3189 Durham, NC 27715-3189

CANDY SNATCHERS - BUM, 7" Need I even recommend this? The Candy Snatchers do kick ass rock and roll and demand your attention. Great stuff! Every 7" of theirs is good (but be wary of their CD ... eek!). (GG)

Solamente Records 124 St. Mark's Place #2 Brooklyn, NY 11217

CHELSEA - ALTERNATIVE HITS, CD Old British punk with an oi twist. Any fan of the early British movement should grab this; any oi historian should as well. (GG)

Captain Oi! PO Box 501 High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 8QA

CHELSEA - THE PUNK SINGLES COLLECTION 1977-82, CD The title says it all. 12 Chelsea singles here, with basically all the Oi! classics most of you have probably never heard. An excellent comp of these oft-forgotten brits. (MH)

Captain Oi!

NOAM CHOMSKY-PROPAGANDA AND CONTROL OF THE PUBLIC MIND 2xCD A double CD documentation of a Noam Chomsky lecture about corporate control over our lives. As with all these lecture documentations, it's always informative but to be honest I'd rather read Noam than listen to him. There's so much information here that a lot of it just breezes by. (DS)

AK Press Audio/G-7 Welcoming Committee PO Box 3-905 Corydon Winnipeg MB R3M-3S3 CANADA

BILLY CHILDISH & HIS FAMOUS HEADCOATS - 17% HENDRIX WAS NOT THE ONLY MUSICIAN, CD BOOK This is an incredible idea that could only have been done on someone as prolific as Billy Childish, this should and could have been a big box set with a lot more, but the idea was 100% accurate. This domestic CD version of the album "17% Hendrix was not the only musician" comes with a thick 5" book. The book contains Billy's other works: oil paintings, woodcuts, poetry, story telling and a great chronological history of his life. Not only do you get the great book but a CD, with a few killer patented Childish tracks ("That Was Then This is Now" or a rowdy cover of "Pinhead"). Any childish fan must have this and it's a great place to start for all you not in the know. (EA)

Slab -o- Concrete Publication Distribution

THE CHUBBIES - SUBURBAN ROCK DOLLS, 7" Somewhere between the Muffs and the Go-Gos lies the a-side of the new Chubbies single. I really liked their LP on Sympathy, but I am thinking that these songs weren't from the A-list from this recording session. The B-side has a mid-tempo rocker, "Suburban Rock Dolls" with a lot of la-la-la-las and a few too many seconds to its length. "When I had Long Hair", the third track, definitely has a Kinks feel with some doubled up drums and walking bass that may make me turn around and like this single after all. Oh, I shouldn't have too, but this is one of those all "chick" groups. (EA)

SuperSonic RefrigeRecords Via Boccadasse, 33/17 16146 Genoa, Italy

CO.ED- SOMETIMES ALWAYS MAYBE NEVER, CD The band called co.ed is easily the best thing I've heard all year. Finally a disc that has the power behind it to make you have a good time listening to it. Co.ed combines great and fast pop-punk playing with excellent vocals from the red-hot lungs of Kathy Cagigas. The disc is loaded with feel good harmonies and melodies. With songs like "X-Files Addict" and "If I Ran the Zoo" the band tackles the bigger problems of today's messed up world. With the 10,000 punk bands that come out of California every year, I really hope that this one doesn't go unnoticed. Because this band is different, they're good! (Listen to the end for a "hidden" acoustic version of "Happy", a song from the band that

had the sexiest Chicago drummer alive, The Bollweevils. (BC)

Cool Guy Records 10140 Gard Ave. Santa Fe Springs, CA. 90670

COOS BAY CITY ROLLERS - LIVING WITH A REBEL GIRL, 7" This is a strange little 7-inch. The "A" side features the title track in which the Rollers sound like the B52's doing Madonna's "Material Girl" mixed in with their own "...rebel girl." And then the "B" side is a banjo-fueled song called "Me and McKenzie." Very odd stuff here. (BC)

Severance Records PO Box 2271, Portland, OR. 97208

COWPERS/SWEEP THE LEG JOHNNY - SPLIT, 7" Both of these bands play rock of the emo/indie ilk, never forgetting the rock. Do YOU like the rock? If so, do not delay, buy. You just might be pleased. (MD)

Choke records PO box 4694, Chicago, IL 60680

Divot records PO box 14061 Chicago, IL 60614

CRIMP SHRINE - DUCT TAPE SOUP, CD Somehow this didn't get in a few months back when this classic pop-punk LP was re-released. This could be the high point in what we now all seem to call "pop-punk". I would assume like the original LP and singles that this CD's benefit the Food Not Bombs organization. Honestly I haven't listened to this LP in a long time and this actually held up to my newer, different expectations. This was a high point of Lookout! records and the whole silly movement that followed. This is a great album that finally got to see the day of light for the mall shopping kids on convenient compact disc format. (EA)

Lookout! Records

CROSS MY HEART - CROSS MY HEART, CD Uggh! It hurts to listen to this stuff. I think you would call this, "emo" but I would just call it horrible. I wish I could think of an effective way to express how un-enjoyable this was for me to listen to, but I can't, so I'll just say, "it sucked". I guess if you like this genre of music then check this out, but if not, then stay far, far away. (JK)

Deep Elm Records, PO box 1965 New York, NY 10156

CROSSED OUT - NO TITLE, CD The inevitable CD discography of a seminal "power-violence" band. Includes all the hits in one place and one live track. (GG)

Boot; try Vacuum?

THE CUFFS - BOTTOMS UP, CD Radical Records keep putting out the street punk that we love to hear. The Cuffs remind me a lot Submachine. A bunch of songs about drinking, fighting, working, and more drinking. Yeah, this music is completely generic in many senses, but I have to pay special credit to the lyrics. They are intense and have more words than a Bad Religion song. Definitely singalong punk. (SY)

Radical 77 Bleecker St #C2-21, New York, NY 10012

Our review policy is very simple: Independently published? We review it. However, that doesn't mean that it gets a good review. If a reviewer likes your zine, you get a good review. If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your zine is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

DARKEST HOUR - PROPHECY FULFILLED, CD This isn't really up my ally, but I can tell you that Darkest Hour plays metal whose music is simple and distorted with the gruff metal voice of darkness. (MD)

DEFECTIVES - D IS FOR..., 7" More solid NYC style rock and roll. Cacaphone is prolific and consistent. (GG)

Cacaphone

THE DEGENERATES - GREATEST SHITS, CD I have a major problem reviewing this because it is a CDR with homemade labels and liner. In a way I guess it's cool because it is 100% DIY, but honestly, the money used to buy CDRs could be poured into a demo for a similar cost - and I don't even know if this really exists for the general public. It might, but might not. So should I be reviewing it? Interesting question. Regardless, the music was poor, the packaging same. Bad crusty drunk-punk. (GG)

DEVIATES - MY LIFE, CD Take a little bit of Bouncing Souls and then add a tad of Pennywise and what you get is a Deviate shake. You can taste the main ingredients a lot but the end result is so good that you don't mind it one bit. Get the point. Get this! (BC)

Theologian Records P.O. Box 1070 Hermosa Beach, CA. 90254

DICKIE STABONER - THE NEXT LEVEL, CD "Melodic hardcore," "power pop," any way you slice it, it's nothing to write home about. (MD)

Unkle Kunkle's Records, PO box 2965 Tempe, AZ 85280-2965

THE DINKS - ROCKET TO RUIN, 7" If the Ramones were from Italy... (MD)

Gonna Puke via monteverdi 43, palermo 90145 Italy

CHARLES DOUGLAS-THE BURDENS OF GENIUS CD Who the fuck is Charles Douglas? A strange CD of sappy love songs sang by a guy with no voice and no real ear for good lyrics. Who can afford to put stuff like this out? (DS)

Voltage Box 7F 1000 Smith Level Rd. Carrboro NC 27510

DOWNWAY - KACKNACKER, CD Melodic hardcore from Canada. Speedy and chunky guitars, good backing vocals, and, most importantly, production values that aren't as polished as most in the genre. The raw production gives it a nice DIY punk flavor that is often missing. I dig it. (MH)

206 Records 8314 Greenwood Ave N. Suite 102 Seattle WA 98103

DIRT BIKE ANNIE - SITCOMS AND SUMMER CAMPS, 7" Mutant Pop hostages, Dirt Bike Annie have escaped to record this single for the absolutely fab label, Break Up Records. I should give them at least one bad review so they don't become big, cause we all hate the things we love to become popular. This is pop-punk to the extreme, the A-side has the Meatballs theme song and a slower ballad. The B-

side has some vocals that are sweet as a candy cane on the X-mas tree. The dual male-female vocals make the two pop shots on the back the winning side of this single. (EA)

Break Up Records 3935 Farm Brook Lane, Columbus, OH 43204

DISTRESS/BOYCOT - SPLIT, 10" Powerful dis-punk, both bands are a surprise to my ears. Boycott are speedy with an abundance of tempo changes. Great songs are an added bonus. Distress sound like the long-lost Discharge album you always wanted to own. A great booklet accompanies the record filled with lyrics and illustrations. If political hardcore is your cup of tea then I suggest that you pick this record up. (SY)

Ignition Records, PO Box 417, 1800 AK Alkmaar Holland

DUOTRON-THE COMPLETE BOOK OF... CD A compilation of albums (I guess) from a crazy synchopated noise band with a singer whose voice sounds like she/he's a munchkin. Certainly not what I'd listen to every day but unique in its own way. (DS)

Scratch Recordings 109 West Cordova St. Vancouver BC V6B 1E1

ENON - NO TITLE, 7" Enon is John Schmersal's (from Brainiac) project. Both songs are good in their own ways and combine acoustic and synth qualities, as well as changes in mood. I especially like "On the list of Short Demands." Recommended for the romantic and music nerd in us all... (MD)

All City 2413 Medill, Chicago, IL 60647

ESTRADA/SHOSHIN - SPLIT, 7" Both bands have blurry group shots, which means noise rock. Estrada does one tune and Shoshin does two. Big Black would be proud, or at least amused enough to sue them over the bass sound. (BC)

Stickfigure PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

EVERSAR - BREAKFAST CLUB, 10" The best of the month award goes to the Italian bambinos in Eversar. This is 10 inches of guitar driven punk rock that you can hum along too. 7 brilliant songs with enough hooks to snag a carp. They even manage to get some piano in there on "People Looking Upward." It takes talent to sneak piano into punk. (BC)

Green Records via S. Francesco 60 35100- Padova, Italy

THE EYELINERS - ROCK 'N' ROLL BABY!, 7" Kind of like a more mature Donnas or more garage Runaways, you decide. The title song "Rock 'n' Roll Baby", is a teenage classic stomp, leather jackets and all. The flip side "Bad Attitude", picks up on the vibe and keeps rockin' and a rollin'. This excites me for 1999, more girl garage bands please. (EA)

Sympathy for the Record Industry

EX-FORK - WHAT'S NEXT, TOMORROW?, CD You have to admire a band that gives you a sore throat just listening to them. Stenchy hardcore at it's finest.

Razorblade-shredded dual vocals over heavy fuzz-laden guitars and pounding drums. The CD ends with 15 minutes of live tracks that I could do without, but this is still a winner. (MH)

Cool Guy 10140 Gard Ave Santa Fe Springs CA 90670

FAR APART - HAZEL, 7" Saprook from Scandinavia dudes. Actually from Sweden to be precise. Three songs about relationships and regret, as far as the PK can see. Nice swaying music—makes me feel like I should be in a John Hughes film. If you like Sense Field, you might like this. (PK)

Crank!, 7223 Wilshire Blvd., #823, Santa Monica, 90403

FAT DAY/HARRIET THE SPY - SPLIT, 7" Fat Day plays spastic punk, in sort of the Melt Banana vein, with rad melodies and vocals. Harriet the Spy plays less spastically and a bit more snottily, but also incorporates rad melodies and vocals. You should buy this. Now. It is good. No joke. (MD)

Donut friends PO box 3192 Kent Ohio 44240

FAY WRAY - S/T, CD Straight-ahead melodic punk rock with some decent melodic guitar lines. What really makes this album is the vocalists ability to turn a phrase. Some fun and creative lyrics here, that put this album a step above the rest of the pack. (MH)

No Idea PO Box 14636 Gainesville FL 32604-4636

FIFI AND THE MACH 3 - NEW RACE, 7" Japanese rock 'n'roll that starts right off with the Radio Birdman song "New Race" and goes from there. If you are into the rock and roll punk scene you know this band and will want this, though I find this single a little too bland. (EA)

Wrench Records BCM Box 4049, London, WC1N 3XX

FIFI AND THE MACH III - NEW RACE, 7" Girl fronted rock and roll from Japan. I think it's pretty mediocre. (GG)

Wrench records BCM Box 4049 London WC1N 3XX

FIREBALLS OF FREEDOM - THE NEW PROFESSIONALS, CD Poor man's Didjits, falling in line with the Laughing Hyenas, perhaps? Not that these are bad things, just comparisons I haven't used in a long time which gives this the urgency and fresh heavy AC/DC sound that we have missed for awhile. While you take your pretty emo bands, I will go to the bar and rock out with the Fireballs of Freedom. Produced by the often wonderful Tim Kerr. (EA)

Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

THE FRUMPIES-FRUMPY ONE PIECE CD A CD that collects all of the seminal Fumpies singles onto one easy-to-play CD. For those of you not hip to the Frumpies, they were (are??) an Olympia, WA super-group comprised of members of Bikini Kill & Bratmobile (now members are in bands like The Pee Chees & The Make*Up) who put out low-fi rave ups under the name The Frumpies. Different enough from the bands from which its members are drawn, The Frumpies were able to capture a totally different feel

and tune during the revolution summers, winters, springs and falls of the early-to-mid 90s. While most of their singles are still in print, this CD is one stop shopping for those that don't have them and for those that do, it's a chance to give a listen to everything without having to get up every three minutes. (DS)

Kill Rock Stars 120 NE State #418 Olympia WA 98507

FURIES / DEAD BOYS CAN'T FLY - SPLIT, 7" Dead Boys Can't fly may have the most stupid lyrics of all time, but they fall right down into the 1976 Ramones and Dictators category. In 1999 from Italy this is mean stuff. The Furies on the other hand are another throw away Queens copy band, maybe in Genoa Italy but in the US of A this just doesn't fly anymore. (EA)

Heavy Metal Productions, Italy

GET DUN RECORDS - A COUPLE OF MINUTES...COMP, 7" 6 bands that cover the realm of the harder edged punk rock. A couple of minutes are really all that you need to listen to this. (BC)

Dan 35 Terrace Ave. Apt#3, Providence, RI. 02909

GHOUL SQUAD - THE WITCH GROWS UP, CD These guys are somewhere between 77-style punk and rock'n'roll. Image a punk version of the Cult. For the most part the music is really cool, but the production on the vocals throws it more towards rock music. While the sound throws you off at first, it kinda grows on you. Interesting. (MH)

Ghoul Squad PO Box 263 Yarmouthport MA 02675

GO FOR BROKE - NEW MUSIC WITH OLD CHORDS, CD My ears are bleeding profusely. I am writing this review while rounding this recording out and the songs of Go For Broke are enough to kill my spirit. Ska punk is just about the edge before I decide to jump off of the bridge and plunge to my untimely, yet much anticipated death. The horrific sounds of simplistic power chords mixed with the deafening tone of horns is enough to cause tears to fall from my face. In case you are wondering at this point, this is a bad review. Very bad. (BR)

HANKSHAW - NOTHING PERSONAL, CD The whole thing sounds like Hot Water Music and then the vocals kick in and it could be commercial rock. I can't say I enjoy the vocals at all. Perhaps a Natalie Merchant styling? The music is really good, but the vocals ruin everything. Hankshaw now have a release on Doghouse, which is the label that will connect all the mall kids with the hardcore kids. That's a bad thing. If have not figured it out yet, I can't get into this at all. (SY)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

THE HATERS - PREDETERMINED BY ACCIDENT, 7" More nutty industrial music put out by those hipsters at Vinyl Communications. This is like on big smorgasbord of organic noise—like an orderly chaos, as contradictory as that may seem. Let me put this another way. Think of what would happen if the

Stomp performance troupe hooked up with Einstürzende Neubauten. You could very well get something close to the contents of this here 7". The anti-thesis to muzak folks. (PK)

Vinyl Communications, PO Box 8623, Chula Vista CA, 91912

HINDSIGHT - BUSINESS CLASS, CD Hindsight meshes the commercial rock sound into their blend of punk. The result is a bit anthemic at times, a bit emo at times, with metal riffs spattered in between. "Business Class" is not terrible, but I would mostly recommend this to the folk who hold a place for MTV rock in their hearts. (MD)

Building Records PO box 1010 Dee why 2099 n.s.w. Australia

HOLLAND—S/T CDEP First off, I have no idea how they manufactured this CD. Half of it is totally clear!! It's really unbelievable to look at. Kudos to whoever figured out how to do that. Packaging aside, Holland play a catchy synth-pop with some really dreamy vocals. Worth checking out. (DS)

Audioinformationphenomena 1625 Oakwood Dr. San Mateo CA 94403

HOUSEBOY - 1465 TAMARACK STREET PRESS ROOM, CD The usually reliable Stiff Pole comes up short this time. Melodic guitar pop (further spawn of Jawbreaker's intense popularity and strong influence) that for some reason sounds like classic rock to me. Needs works - the notes say the record was recorded live in one take. Bad idea? Could be. (GG)

Stiff Pole Records PO box 20721 St. Petersburg, FL 33742

I AGAINST I - HEADCLEANER, CD 14 songs from Epitaph's new power trio that come off like the new Bad Religion. But don't let that fool you, as you might be surprised at some of the hooks and melodies that these boys can lay on your bad self. They keep the songs varied enough to keep your interest level on high. The production is airtight and everything sounds like you expect it would for an Epitaph release. I think that these guys are from Holland or somewhere fucked up like that. I give them kudos for playing in them damn wooden shoes. (*Note that this is not the I Against from Michigan that is a cool hardcore band.) (BC)

Epitaph Records

THE JACKIE PAPERS - UCKFAY OUYAY, CD By the cover I pictured rock 'n' roll or possibly garage. Three girls and a guy do a hardcore/rock thing that sounds like the late eighties punk that lead up to bands like the Queens being big. This is a decent disc, but it ain't the Angry Samoans or Naked Raygun. Mediocre review for a mediocre CD. (EA)

Stiff Pole PO Box 20721 St. Petersburg, FL 33742

JAWBOX - MY SCRAPBOOK OF FATAL ACCIDENTS, CD Wow! What a project. Jawbox was at the top of my list quite a few years ago when I drove from Michigan to Washington DC in a blizzard to see them at the Working Holiday party. They didn't disappoint and they really never have. Even after they "sold out" and went major, they still made great music and put their releases out on vinyl on Kim's label, Desoto records. This CD has wonderful packaging that encaps a career of a band that paid attention to detail in all their releases. Two booklets for your browsing, one of photos (many from their major label posters and records) and the other is a listing of every show that they played in their eight years. The CD has twenty-two songs of mostly hard to find B-sides and compilations tracks, along with a few unreleased gems and live stuff thrown in. Unlike most bands, Jawbox make a great B-side album that may not flow all that well, but given the mix of times and places that these songs are recorded in you can still listen to it like a mixed tape that only a real Jawbox fan could have made by digging through all their 45's and live tapes. (EA)

Desoto Records PO Box 60335 WDC 20039

JEJUNE—THIS AFTERNOON'S MALADY, CD Pairing sugary harmonies so sickeningly sweet I had to brush after listening to them with guitar riffs lifted whole-hog from AOR bands of the late '70s and early '80s (think Journey, Asia and Toto), Jejune is proof-positive that this whole bastardized "emo" sound that's all the rage here in the late '90s had better do SOMETHING original or it's not following us into the next millennium. (DS)

Big Wheel Recreation

JELLO BIAFRA - IF EVOLUTION IS OUTLAWED, ONLY OUTLAWS WILL EVOLVE, 3 x CD Jello Biafra has been notorious for his spoken word albums and up until now, I have not owned one and have only heard small fragments of his past works. After soaking this entire box set of his latest ramblings in, I feel the need to explore his previous works. He articulates his views with eloquence and humor combined and keeps the listener attentive at all times. One minute he has you crying tears of laughter and then next you have a lump in your throat due to the seriousness of what he speaks of. This must be heard and appreciated because this release is that good. (BR)

Alternative Tentacles Records, P.O. Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092

JENNY PICCOLO - LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR, PIC 7" This definitely fits the qualifications of a Three One G release. Fast crazy hardcore with a hint of thrash. There is distortion on almost every instrument and it is more sludgy than I would have imagined. The artwork on the record is great, but I never feel that the additional costs ever justify a picture disc. Over a dozen songs and after awhile they all sound the same. (SY)

Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177

JETS TO BRAZIL—ORANGE RHYMING DICTIONARY

CD Everyone and their mother is falling over themselves to praise this album and I'm certainly not going to do much different. However, I do want to point out its shortcomings—which are substantial—before moving onto how it's able to rise above them. First off, the title is terrible. Blake Schwarzenbach is widely considered to be one of punk's finest lyricists. Why he came up with a title this stupid is beyond me. Second, Blake sings half the songs with a fake English accent. It was kinda cute when he sang that way in Jawbreaker back when a lot of East Bay bands were doing it too, but Blake lives on a different coast, it's years later and let's face it: it was kinda strange even way back when. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the first song totally sucks. It is so bad—and so unlike all the other songs on the album—that I highly recommend you just immediately move to track two. Those points out of the way, I haven't been able to stop listening to this album. Full of unforgettable hooks, haunting lyrics and an awesome balance of power songs and slow songs, this could be one of the best records of '99. I know I'm an ass for pointing out its shortcomings, but believe me: it transcends them tenfold. (DS)

Jade Tree 2310 Kenwynn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810

MANISH KALVAKOTA—S/T CD Another bizarre Voltage release, although infinitely more listenable than the Charles Douglas CD I had to review this issue. My man Manish rocks out with a Sitar on this disk, accompanying himself with guitars, keyboards and drums. When Manish sticks to the instrumental, it's pretty awesome—you don't hear sitars every day and their sound is refreshing, especially after reviewing 15 CDs. But Manish can't sing and can't write so unfortunately when he opens his mouth, the CD drops off considerably. (DS)
Voltage Records Box 7F 1000 Smith Level Rd. Carrboro NC 27510

THE KASSOS - IT WOULD BE MY PLEASURE TO FUCK YOU UP, 7" Rip-roaring DIY punk rock reminiscent of early New Bomb Turks. Relatively lo-fi production, but raging guitars, pounding drums, and screaming vocals make this my first pick of '99. A winner. (MH)

The Kassos PO Box 15237 San Diego CA 92175

KERMIT'S FINGER - STRAIGHT FROM THE BAR, CD Really basic punk stuff here. Like an early Fighters (remember the Chicago band?) meets Pegboy at their first practice. They do have a catchy lyric in "Sorry mom, I spent your Christmas present money on beer." Barry Manilow couldn't touch that with a ten-foot dick. This might be fun for newer punks that haven't heard a dozen bad punk bands like this before. But what the hell, they sound like they are having fun, so how cares what a dumb punk planet (a \$3.50 punk planet mind you!) reviewer thinks. (BC)

Poorest Quality Records PO Box 458, Boston, MA. 02129

KID DYNAMITE - KID DYNAMITE, CD Ok, shit. This is very hard, driving, energetic old school hardcore punk rock. Pretty good. Nothing very new or innovative, but this band does what it does very well, and better than many. The production is good, not too clean, not too rough, and the energy of the band comes across really well. I bet these guys would be really good live. This kind of falls in that category that a lot of stuff falls into for me, the "not really my bag, but a lot of people will probably like it" category. I don't know if this says more about the music or me but either way it probably really doesn't matter. Check this out if it sounds interesting. (JK)

Jade Tree 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE 19810

KIND OF LIKE SPITTING / ROSE OF SHARON - SPLIT, 7" Both bands on this split record are of the modern emo variety, one being more melodic than the other (if you can believe that). Kind Of Like Spitting is really mellow, more so than normal and although it started out with potential, the vocals did not take long to grate on my nerves. Hence, no sale. On the b-side, Rose Of Sharon saved me a lot of time by instantly causing me to motion towards taking the record off of the stereo and putting it back into its sleeve with their take on the Midwest emo sound. The final results: I am bored. (BR)
Jealous Butcher 6022 SE 43rd, Portland, OR 97206

KITO - S/T, LP In the last few years, many people have boasted the love for European hardcore and I may be the only one who hasn't seen what the rest have. In fact, most European hardcore is downright boring to me. Kito had some elements in the very beginning that may have won me over but once the vocals ensued, I could not believe what I was hearing. The vocals are as out of place as the day is long and each song is filled with lyrics that do not fit the music at all. The incoherence is much too noticeable to ignore. (BR)

Flat Earth P.O. Box 169, Bradford, BD1 2UJ, UK

THE KNIT SEPARATES - MAYBE IN TIME I COULD CHANGE, 7" Jangly off-kilter indie-pop. It has a dreamy, yet unsettling quality that is a good soundtrack to a bad dream. Bothering, and not necessarily in a good way.

3 Acre Floor 1233 Arguello Apt. 7 San Francisco CA 94122

KODIAK - S/T, CD According to the one sheet accompanying this release, Kodiak has toured with The Promise Ring in their recent past. I immediately pictured a sound that I wouldn't be into but I heard something a bit different upon each listen. There are some elements inside this disc that remind me of many Touch And Go artists and some that bring to mind early nineties alternative acts. However, the combination of these elements is nothing close to anything I would be found listening to on a regular basis. (BR)

One Louder Records, P.O. Box 1NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE 99 1NW

LAGWAGON - LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS, CD

According to the informational sheet that came with this CD, Lagwagon has grown musically since their last album. I don't think I need to have heard the last album to know that they couldn't have changed that much. It's all the same to me. (MD)

Fat Wreck Chords

LAST DAYS OF APRIL - RAINMAKER, CD I was unfortunate enough to receive a surplus of emotionally charged pop records this issue. I can appreciate very small amounts of this genre of done right but much of it is much too over indulgent for my tastes. Last Days Of April fall into a category of bands that have members outgrown whatever it was that got them involved in this scene and opt to play melodic college rock, somewhere between The Get Up Kids and REM. They have all the trimmings to make them big and it would not hurt my feelings at all to see Last Days Of April do so. (BR)

Bad Taste Records, Stora Sodergatan 38, S-222 23 Lund, Sweden

LIFTER PULLER - THE ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS, CD This is some mature rock coming from Minneapolis for your sorry ass. L.P. seems to come off at times like Rocket from The Crypt meets Archers of Loaf with Beck singing in a trash can. So if that sounds interesting to you, then you might want to check this disc out. The band takes you for a roller coaster ride of many feels and tempos throughout this six-song record. Put on your black shades, have a beer and settle down to do some heavy lifting and pulling. (BC)

Threatening Letters 3010 Hennepin Ave Box 292, Minneapolis, MN. 55408

LIMECELL - S/T 7" The cover of this e.p. looks like a G.G. Allin record and something tells me that Limecell were or are fans of the deceased filth rock king. Musically, Limecell plays simplistic and gritty 80's style heavy metal with songs about the more violent elements of humanity. There is little here to interest me in any way but the song "Crazy Dave" did strike me funny, if that means anything. (BR)

Headache P.O. Box 204, Midland Park, NJ 07432

LOUDMOUTHS - SPIT IT OUT, 7" The Loudmouths have had four or five killer singles released in a row, and we got another burning a hole through the desk right now. The A-side contains two raunchy, dirty hardcore tracks that are delivered with such spite and energy that you will sing "Spit it Out" and "Fingered" all night long (preferably with a partner). While the B-side has Pete Loudmouth gives us a rare male-vocals on the Eater tune, "Room for One". Kudos to the Loudmouths, keepin it real. (EA)

702 Records PO Box 204 Reno, NV 89504

LYNRYD'S INNARDS - HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM, 7" Still as catchy and poppy as ever, Lynryd's Innards won't disappoint the fans of the snotted pop punk. (MD)

Harmless Records, 1437 W. Hood Chicago, IL 60660

LYNYRD'S INNARDS - YOU'RE WRECKIN' ME, CD These guys play some of the best melodic punk out there. Reminiscent of Husker Du, they've got the cool melodic guitar leads, gruff vocals, and a touch of pop sensibility that make for a near-classic album. The cover of the Cure tune is a nice finishing touch. Recommended. (MH)

Johanns Face Records PO Box 479164 Chicago IL 60647

MADCAP - ON MY OWN, CD More bad pop punk. The cover is dumb, each band member has 4 pics from one of those \$2 photo booths. Always bad ideas for an album cover since each person feels required to make a cheesy smirk/silly face and look off into space at a different angle each time. DUMB. (GG)

Paradigm PO Box 3275 Hollywood, CA 90078-3275

THE MAN I FELL IN LOVE WITH - DIS YOURSELF, CD EP Dude, these boys ought to rename themselves The Band I Fell In Love With because it's so true. Comprised of members from Harriet The Spy and The Party Of Helicopters (but sounding nothing like either of those bands), these three young gents are making some of the dreamiest, crushworthiest music out there today. Definitely one of my faves to emerge from the incestuous pocket of Kent, OH bands. Melodic, noisy, sappy, blippy, and just all around awesome. These boys may look all tuff and sassy in their other bands, but rilly they're just a buncha shoegazers. I cannot recommend this enough so what are ya waitin' for?! You will love them too my friends. (PK)

Keystone-Ember, PO Box 1798, Wilkes-Barre PA, 18703

MARK BRODIE & THE SABOTEURS - T.I.G.E.R ROCK, 7" Superfun instrumental garage rock. I think that pretty much sums it up. Beach party music made by these four rocknrollers from the 'couv. Surfing and secret spy missions—what more could you want? If you are at all into this scene, you will love. Great cover art too. (PK)

Americian Pop Project, PO Box 2271, San Rafael CA, 94912

MERCURY PROGRAM - S/T, 7" Emotional math rock. 2 songs that are in the vein of Hoover and the moodiness of Slint. The production is minimal and works well with the songwriting. The Mercury Program are a band that comes off powerful and personal, without being pretentious. (SY)

Boxcar Records, PO Box 1141, Melbourne, FL 32902-1141

MILLENCOLIN - SAME OLD TUNES, CD High-quality melodic hardcore made more interesting by the occasional use of sax and keyboards. These guys have their style wired, but are also capable of kicking into ska, reggae, and other styles. Lyrics range from funny stuff to personal and scene politics. I'd pick this up over most of the other stuff in the genre. (MH)

Epitaph Records

MORNING SHAKES - THE GO SOUND OF THE SHAKES!, 7" More good stuff from these stalwarts. Prod. By Baise, sound by the Shakes. Good rock and roll, NYC style – the only place that could birth the Devil Dogs also spawned these fellers. Get it all. (GG)

Cacaphone Records

MOUNT MCKINLEYS - NO TITLE, 7" Psychedelic instrumentals? Yes, it is as scary as it sounds. Listen to this once and you will want to return it. (GG)

Anthraxite PO Box 10785 Pittsburgh, PA 15203

MR. CRISPY - END OF THE WEEK, 7" Pop punk. The vocals are the weirdest sounding I've ever heard. How the fuck does it sound like that? I've no fucking clue. You have to hear it to understand. (GG)

\$3 ppd. We're not on a label Records PO Box 5816 Edmond, OK 73082-5816

MUTE ANTS - THE TERRIBLE TUNES OF THE MUTE ANTS, CD This is pop punk, played well. In my opinion it is of the Screaming Weasel school musically, although replaces the all out snotty vocals for a more direct delivery. Comes in a nice package – Mutant Pop is one of the few labels willing to supply a 16 page booklet every time, instead of the 4 pager most folds give. Nice. (I encourage anyone who reads this to email Tim @ mutantpop@aol.com or just write him at the address below. He runs a great (super fast) mail-order distro that has a very fun (free) catalog/zine.) (GG)

Mutant Pop Records 5010 NW Shasta Corvallis, OR 97330

THE NECKBONES - 64 DAYS, 7" I got a chance to play with these guys up in Green Bay a few months ago and they blew the doors off the joint, the surprise of the night. Their debut LP on Fat Possum records is a scorcher, though live they doubled up the ante and played like they were on fire. This single is two songs of different flavors, the A-side is a blues-rock-punk melting pot much like their LP. The B-side "We're All Winners" is a slower, almost poppy song that sounds unlike the Neckbones I know, but a nice change that makes it an excellent pairing for the raunchy "64 Days". (EA)

Misprint Records PO Box 8189 Murfreesboro, TN 37133

NINETYNINE - 767, CD NinetyNine is the new band from Laura Macfarlane of Sleater-Kinney fame. NinetyNine play a very enjoyable mixture of electronic pop and guitar rock with nice female vocals. Many songs on this album are flavored with Xylophones, Glockenspiel, Vibraphones and keyboard; instruments that should be used more often in rock bands. I like this because it is different from your everyday screaming punk band or boring emo group that we hear so much of. Recommended. (JK)

Endearing Records, PO box 69009, wp. Mb. R3P2G9

ONE WAY SYSTEM - HATE, 7" These big French hardcore punks come off a lot like Slapshot. An aggressive piece of vinyl here for sure. (BC)

Soap & Spikes Records

OPERATION: CLIFF CLAVIN - PARADISE LOST, CD A pretty fun 'n' hopping CD by these good egg punkrockas. Fast, melodic, and snotty music with lots of harmonizing and witty lyrics. This CD comes with a fat booklet complete with song explanations, cute drawings, guitar tabs, a brief D.I.Y. guide to putting out records, a band sticker, and a patch to boot. Not bad for only five clams, huh? Punksfuck and chocked full of sincerity. Plus they pay homage to The Coug by covering one of his songs in fine style. And that's aces in my book. (PK)

Plan-It-X, 5810 W. Willis Rd., Georgetown IN. 47122-9117

PANTHRO U.K. UNITED 13 - SOUND OF A GUN, CD A great album from an awesome band. Is the name too long for you? Tough shit, all the great bands have U.K. in their name! Panthro U.K. United 13 have a definite Naked Raygun meets Stiff Little Fingers sound going on. Heaviness with lots of melody makes it all work really well. Whoever sequenced the tracks on this album had their skills down, because every song flows together perfectly. I need to mention that I have seen these guys live and they are intense. I heard this album before I saw them, and I am now impressed at how close this album represents their live sound. (SY)

No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

POP UNKNOWN, SUMMER SEASON KILLS CD I think if I accidentally mixed up all the "emo" albums I've received this month I would have no hope of being able to tell them apart by listening to them because they all sound exactly the fucking same. Fortunately, it wouldn't matter because my review is pretty much the same for all of them: horrible. I just can't get into this lame, whiny, boring guitar pop rock stuff, and I really don't think I ever will. Sorry. (JK)

Deep Elm Records, PO box 1965 New York, NY 10156

THE PRESSURE - I WANNA CALL SOMEONE, 7" Another great pop release from What Else? Records. The Pressure is catchy, fun, and puts a creative twist on their punk tendencies. Fans of fun punk will not be disappointed. (MD)

What Else? Records, PO box 3411, Dayton, OH 45401

THE PROMISE RING-BOYS+GIRLS EP Is it just me or has it seemed like eons since the 'Ring has put out an album? I guess maybe it's because their first three albums came right on top of another that a perceived dry spell was inevitable. No one could continue to put records out at the rate they had been doing it. So a break, a million tours, and a van wreck later and the Promise Ring grace us with the Boys+Girls EP. Inside the natty designed package lies a 3-song 'Ring disc that finds the band in musical territory that is similar to the sugary, driven pop they laid out on

their *Nothing Feels Good* LP. Lyrically, however, I'm totally impressed by the progress this album represents. Lyricist Davey VonBolen has always had an innate ability to create vivid scenes, moods, textures and feelings with his words but this time he outdoes himself by doing it as masterfully as he has in the past, but with half the words. His lyrical conservation is something to believe. Who would have thought a song like "American Girl" which uses a sum total of 25 words could illicit such strong emotion on the part of the listener, but it does so successfully. This EP, as any good EP should, leaves me wanting to hear more new stuff from *The Promise Ring*. (DS)

Jade Tree 2310 Kenwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE 19810

RADON - AW GEEZ, LP The craziest colored vinyl you will ever see. I have been a big Radon fan for the longest time. Combining equal parts of whiny vocals and jangly guitars, they always reminded me of Sebadoh. 10 songs total on this wax and it's mastered at 45 rpm so it sounds real good. Recommended. (SY)

No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

RAW POWER - REPTILE HOUSE, CD When I first heard Raw Power on the *Welcome To 1984* compilation, they literally made me hate all the music I was listening to at the time. Their hardcore put everyone else's to shame. Their Brown studio demo is still one of the best things I have ever heard. 14 years later Raw Power doesn't disappoint me. Well, it is not *Screams From The Gutter*. It is nowhere close, but the song writing is still excellent. Great riffs, great lyrics and tons of energy. Of course there have been a few modifications in the lineup, and that changes the sound a little. I can't say I enjoy the production techniques of the late 90's used on this album. Raw Power have always had a tendency to teeter over the fine lines between hardcore and metal. I have to say that Reptile House has the tendency to go right into the metal zone, yet 17 tracks in 30 minutes is still impressive. (SY)

Westworld Productions, PO Box 2091, Tucson, AZ 85702

REGISTER - REGISTER, CD Somebody should "register" this band in the Suck Society of America. Hahahahaha! But seriously folks, this is really lame emo-type shit that I can't stand for two seconds. It's too bad there are people out there who actually support this crap. (JK)

Roja Records, PO box 300355 Denver, CO 80203

RENDER USELESS - SELF-TITLED, CD Fairly aggressive yet still tuneful punk-hc-whatever. This dandy collection is comprised of *Render Useless* releases since the band's inception "back in the day". Ho ho! Lots of biting, chuggy guitars which are the most interesting parts of the songs to me personally. Starts off all spastic and then careens into the full-on rock. The vocals tend to bring it down a notch though. Sorry boys! Bonus points for purty packaging, in powder bloo no less. Body of work releases like this run too long for newcorner ears but are great for fans, friends, foes, and

foos. Hey, this ticking noise at the end of the CD is making me feel funny. Ragh. Call Answer will be the death of us all. (PK)

Clue #2, PO Box 402, Maple Ridge BC, V2X 8K9 Canada

RIFF RAFF - KUSTOM MADE HELL, CD They spell custom with a "k." They use one of those sheik German crosses in their name. BUT they don't cover "Riff Raff" by AC/DC, and for that reason alone I really don't think that they are hardcore at all! The vocals sound at times like the Misfits meet Lint Rancid circa '92. On the back of the disc they have a photo of the band from a live show and it seems like they have plenty of fans. So they really don't need anymore. So why should I review it? Does it make a damn difference? Hell no... that's a Kustom made Hell no. (BC)

F.S.A. Records 706f Capitola Ave. Capitola, CA. 95010

SATISFACT-THE THIRD MEETING AT THE THIRD COUNTER CD The third Satisfact full-length finds the band as far from their initial Joy Division cover band status as they can possibly go without becoming a completely different band. Don't get me wrong, I love the first Satisfact album exactly because it is so reminiscent of Joy Division, but this album couples the neo-wave sounds they set out on that album with straight-ahead rock. What emerges is a sound that transcends both previous albums. Does that mean I like it more? I still like their Joy Division days best to be honest, but this album certainly does make the head bob. (DS)

K Records PO Box 7154 Olympia WA 98507

SCHRASJ - F, CD Mellow melodic indie rock with a touch of Portishead. Decent, but nothing to get overly excited about. (MD)

Ojet 2055 westheimer #165, Houston, TX 77098

SCIENCE KIT - 7 TIMES AROUND, CD This is quite an interesting CD. Indie rock with a twist. Each song reads as it's own story, and I would recommend this to fans of indie rock, who appreciate melody but still like to be surprised. (MD)

Sit-N-Spin 8 Market St. Wilmington, NC 28401

SEAWEED - ACTIONS AND INDICATIONS, CD Was Seaweed always like this? I'm not sure; they were a band I meant to buy up on a couple times, but ended up being lost in the shuffle as it were - like anyone, I suffer from finite time and money. Thankfully, I do get to hear this new album because it is enjoyable. This is very melodic indie rock sounding punk, but with spirit. Sounds like they care about what they're doing and enjoy themselves. I can wholeheartedly recommend this. (GG)

Merge Records

SET APART - WITHIN THE GUIDING HANDS, 7" Heavy plodding crunchy guitar with screaming vocals. And guess what, they do it to glorify god. Give me a break. (MH)

Finest Hour Records 12780 SW 26st. Miami FL 33175

THE SHAPES - SONGS FOR SENSIBLE PEOPLE, CD Freaky 1978-79 punk neo-funk, weirdo, new-wave band that can only be heard to really understand. Kind of like a poorer's man Urinals or 100 Flowers. The Bass lines may make this disc worth it alone. Like all the Overground Records releases you get nice liner notes, good quality (were possible) and a taste of punk rock history from the other side of the world. Nothing too extreme here, though this could grow on me a lot. (EA)

Overground Records PO Box 1NW Newcastle upon Tyne NE99 1NW

SKEPTIX - SO THE YOUTH, CD This compiles the Skeptix complete discography which includes 3 singles and an LP. The Skeptix formed in 1978 and were contemporaries of Discharge, Broken Bones and the like. Coming out of the European scene of the late 70's / early 80's and having more of a hardcore sound than a punk rock one, the Skeptix kick out without failure. The guitars are buzzsaws. The vocals are also a treat with the lyrics socially conscious and level-headed. This CD was a treat for me and I suggest it for your liking. (SY)

Captain Oi! PO Box 501, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA

SLEATER-KINNEY-GET UP, EP The first single off of what is promising to be my favorite album of '99, Sleater-Kinney's newest, *The Hot Rock*. I've been lucky enough to have a prerelease of the album for months now, so I know how good it is. For those of you without the scene connects (and I've been there countless times, so I know how it feels), this is your first chance to hear the brilliance that is the new S-K. The band was nice enough to choose one of the best tracks off the album, *Get Up*, as their single. As with the rest of the album, *Get Up* picks up where *Dig Me Out* left off and then moves it to an entirely new level. One of the most complex songs—both musically and lyrically—from the album, *Get Up* sounds at times almost like two songs being played simultaneously, with Carrie whispering in your ears while Corin belts away. The result is totally exhilarating and certainly a tantalizing nugget for the album that will follow not soon after. Also on this EP are two B-sides which while good, don't match the intensity of *Get Up*—or any of the other songs off of the new album. (DS)

Kill Rock Stars

SOLAR COASTER - NO TITLE, CD Solar Coaster has that same "Turnbuckle" sound, which is reminiscent of Baiter Space and Sunday Puncher, but still maintains its own individuality. If you like indie rock with the emphasis on rock, then you should check out this record. (MD)

Turnbuckle 163 3rd Ave #435 NY, NY 10003

SOTTOPRESSIONE - COSI' DISTANTE, CD Youth-core out of Italy, Sottoppressione play powerful hardcore. They have the influence and energy of Youth and Today, but definitely also stand on their own. Lyrics in both Italian and English. The production is great and pays attention to how powerful and tight this band is. Track this one down. (SY)

Vacation House Records, Via S.Michele 56 13856
Vigliano Biellese ITALY

STATUE FACTOR - TAO OF SOUL, CD I do not know where to begin describing this record because it is nowhere near being punk rock. In fact, it is not even good. The vocals sound like those of Smashing Pumpkins and the music is annoying rock and roll in it's most basic formula. It took all of one song to realize that I would anything but interested in proceeding further. (BR)

Nebulon Community Records, 102 Annina Ave.,
Stoughton, MA 02072

STEVE AND THE JERKS - JERK'S NOT DEAD, CD Wowee.... This sat in my inbox for a few weeks and I finally opened it. Now, I already owned the LP that graced the cover of the CD, and I figured it was a domestic release of the "Leader of the Jerks" LP. I was wrong, cause this is so much more. Steve and the jerks share a member with the No Talents and are probably shadowed by the leading French band. Instead of the single LP, this sucka contains a couple comp tracks and some singles as well as some of the best 'unreleased material to date. You get a lot of choice covers (Andre Williams, Captain Beefheart, Kinks, etc.) and guest vocals from Cecilla from the No Talents on a track. On top of that Mr. Billy Childish produces it to get that great Medway sound. Party with me punker. (EA)

Solamente 312 Park Place No. 3 Brooklyn, NY 11238

STRATEGO - FIFE AND DRUM CORPS, CD Emocore. Nice heavy guitars that occasionally quite down and get melodic. The singer sounds like he's putting everything he's got into it, which is perfect for the genre. A lot of care went into this CD and it shows, but it's simply not my cup of chai. However, I get the feeling these guys are doing it for the right reasons, and this sucker only costs 7 bucks, so I give it a thumbs up. (MH)

Stratagem Ripcords PO Box 1817 Goleta CA 93116

THE SWEET THINGS- LO-FI IS A 4-LETTER WORD, CD You all know that crap is a four-letter word. So are fuck and damn and hell and putz and lo-fi bad recordings that should only be heard by band members and never the general public. Well I guess that isn't a four-letter word. Oh, well. (BC)

Cut-Out 740 35th Ave. San Francisco, CA. 94121

THE TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE - ONE AFTER THE END, 7" Two pretty cool driving ditties here. Side A—One After the End—is all fast and dance party-like. Like the chicks in Valley Girl should be bopping around to this one. The lyrics sound like they were lifted from a certain Tears For Fears hit—only augmented slightly, hehe. Cool guitar licks. Side B—Hollis Put His Hands Around My Neck—is way dirty and demonic. Bass played like this just oozes sex. Hmm, is it hot in here or is it just me? Kudos to Southern Records for putting out totally different sounding bands. (PK)

Southern, PO Box 59, London N22 1AR England

Southern, PO Box 577375, Chicago IL, 60657-7375

TR6 - PSYCHOBILLY MAYHEM, 7" I am beginning to think that my tastes in music are very narrow. Everything that was sent to me this issue has gotten a bad review and this record has nothing that catches my attention. From the listen I experienced, it was some out of control rockabilly and for some reason, made me think of Hi Fi And The Roadburners, even though they sound nothing alike. Otherwise, nothing memorable for me. (BR)

Headache Records, see Limecell

TURBO AC'S - WINNER TAKE ALL, CD Flat rock and roll. This is bar music, but sounds antiseptic and boring when it should be kick ass. Rock and roll should be fiery and hit like a punch in the stomach—think back to the roots of this stuff. The blues, (Elmore James, James Brown, Muddy Waters) the early rock and roll, (Chuck Berry up to the Stones) and even more recent stuff (Hellacopters, Lazy Cowgirls, et al) and you can quickly understand. Sounds far too safe to net my endorsement. (GG)

Cacaphone PO Box 6058 Albany, NY 12206

UK SUBS - ENDANGERED SPECIES, CD Another re-issue of this 1982 Subs album, with extra bonus tracks. The majority of this album is standard UK Subs—metallic punk/oi, including the classic tunes Countdown and Lie Down and Die. The last four songs from the original album have a slower and more melodic feel, but still stand up well after 17 years. (MH)

Captain Oi! PO Box 501 High Wycombe Bucks HP10 8QA UK

UNEMPLOYED - OPPORTUNITY, CD Pop Punk is the opiate of the masses, I truly believe this. Nowadays, if you want to pacify a large group of kids, take them to a "punk" show or give them a Fat Wreck Chords release to indulge in. This CD is proof of it's effects because every corner of the world now bears at least 100 pop punk bands each day, or so it appears. As with my past opinions, nothing has changed and the Unemployed's brand of speedy, melodic pop(ular) punk is nothing short of droning to these ears. Uncreative and dull. (BR)

Unemployed, 119 Clarence St., Apt. 205, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 5P5

VOLUME ALL-STAR-SELF CONNECTED, TWICE ELECTED CD If it was a perfect world, the Volume All-Star could play at places like the Fireside Bowl between a raging power violence band and a sappy emo trio. But of course it isn't a perfect world and we have things like scene ignorance and genre fascism to deal with. Volume All-Star, with their infectious beats, awesome DJ work and totally beautiful, low-key vocals are one of the most refreshing things I've heard in a while. Get your head out of your ass and open up to something new. (DS)

Team Slabco 1626 21st Ave. Seattle WA 98122

WINTERBRIEF - S/T, 7" A very unusual record indeed. However, as creative as this may appear, it steers into a direction that is very foreign to me. The combination of instruments is probably a winner with the more mature, artist / poet type of audience but I cannot pretend to enjoy this spacey sounding music. An enjoyable ride that I quickly found myself wanting to get off. (BR)

Intellectos Records, 1815 17th St. NW # 817, Washington, D.C. 20009

YOUNG PIONEERS - FREE THE YOUNG PIONEERS, CD This is great, I would love to see a Green Day, Screeching Weasel or Mr. T Experience fan pick this up cause its on Lookout!. Much like the last few releases, I really am starting to love the Young Pioneers. This record is missing everything that I hate about punk these days (too much metal, too slow emo, too many Queens copies). This has got a fresh flavor, its got harmonicas, horns once awhile and natural fuzzed guitar. The Minutemen taught us that you don't need a distortion pedal to be punk, the Young Pioneers remind us. This easily could fall into one of my favorites in the late nineties, just for giving my ears something new to listen too. Thank you, Young Pioneers for taking a god damn chance and doing things the way the kids don't expect it. Oh, kids listen up and pay attention! (EA)

Lookout! Records

V/A - ALL YOU CAN EAT / YOUR MOTHER SPLIT, 7" This record is somewhat hit and miss. Six songs here, and about half of them are worthwhile. Both of the Your Mother songs on the A-side are hits, but the AYCE tune is a throwaway. On Side B, AYCE has one good tune and one throwaway, and the YM song is so-so. Overall though, this is fun, and what else are you gonna spend your cash on, a 7-layer burrito? (MH)

Probe Records PO Box 5068 Pleasanton CA 94566

V/A - DECK CHEESE : VOLUME ONE, CD I think that this CD is more of a sampler than a compilation. If that is the case, then this release already gets a thumbs down for selling already released music. Not that it makes much of a difference anyhow as most of the bands on this disc are big name punk bands who bore me to death. Just to name a few, this CD boasts

the likes of Samiam, The Bouncing Souls, Millencolin, etc. After sampling each band, I was unable to find a single song that I liked. No variance of styles mixed with pre-released music equals an unworthy purchase in my book. (BR)

Deck Cheese Records, 49 Muswell Hill, London N10 3PN

V/A - FLYING BOMB SURPRISE PACKAGE VOL. 2, 7" This falls short of the first edition of Surprise Package from last year. The Rocket 455 track is great, cool backup female vocals make "Santa Ain't Coming for Christmas" sound like it was taken from Phil Spector's masterpiece itself. The B-side falls flat, the Blowtops' track takes an acquired taste for the power of fuzz, fuzz, and more fuzz. With the White Stripes track, we don't go there at all. Picture Dokken without drums, bass or power. Sorry all, but the Dirty's and Bantam Rooster did volume one a lot more bang for the Christmas dollar. (EA)

Flying Bomb Records PO Box 971038, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

V/A - FOUR TWO PUDDING, CD The old Four Two Pudding comp has been re-released on Very Small with the help of No Idea records. Unlike the original black and white which came in a baggie, you get a full color book done with a fancy jewel case and all. With bands like Jawbreaker, Offspring and Screeching Weasel I am very surprised that it took Mr. Hayes this long to re-release this mother. I was offered \$20 for my copy a few years back and in hind sight, I should have taken it. This is a keeper indeed and if you have the original releases that this songs came from before they were re-released than you should sell em' quick make a few bones and buy the CD to replace the songs. Jawbreaker's "Fantastic Planet" is available no where else as far as I know (don't quote me though), Screeching Weasel's "I wanna be a Homosexual" is the tamer version, and Downfall features a pre-Rancid, but post-Ivy Lint. Have fun kiddies. (EA)

Very Small Records / No Idea

V/A - GOING AFTER PUSSY: TEASERS & TIDBITS, CD On this disc, Katon makes certain things clear: 1. His phone messages are hilarious. (He includes snippets of many on here, and they are worth

the price of admission alone. I'd pay Jimmy to leave me messages like that every once in a while to help spice up my boring life.) 2. He loves porn. (Copies of letters from porn companies and the Jenna Jameson fancub, as well as many gratuitous photos in the liner.) 3. He loves great rock and roll. (Anyone familiar with Junk releases knew this, but getting this much mayhem in one place can only help. This CD rips, and is hilarious. Grab it. All tracks available on other Junk releases.) (GG)

Junk Records PO Box 1474 Cyprus, CA 90630

V/A - GOODMORNING / THE LUSHWORKERS SPLIT, 7" Both of these bands are from Winona, Minnesota. GoodMorning play insanely fucked up hardcore. Brilliant while still being complete mess. The Lushworkers are more melodic hardcore, with screaming vocals. An honest and truly DIY release. (MH)

GoodMorning 427 W. 5th St. Winona MN 55987

V/A - HANG 10 VOL. 1, CD All right, I finally get some surf stuff to review! I was actually a little bit disappointed by this compilation. While there are some really good instrumental tracks by such bands as, Man or Astroman?, Mark Brodie and the Beaver Patrol, The Woodies, The Saboteurs, The Tornadoes, and a couple others, a lot of the stuff on here is pop punk type ditties, with a few Beach Boys covers. While these aren't bad, I was hoping for more instrumental stuff. Regardless, this is still pretty cool. Other songs by Cub, Kung Fu Monkeys, Fun Fun Attitude, Boyz Nex' Door, The Queers, J Church, Helen Love, the McRackins, and Phranc w/ Satan's Pilgrims. All that's missing is my band Island Uprising (plug). Any fan of surf and pop-punk should give this a listen. (JK)

American Pop Project, PO box 2271, San Rafael, CA 94912

V/A - HAPPY CHRISTMAS, CD So add this disc to your ever-growing pile of Christmas music done by new artist stack. This slab of cheer contains everything to punk bands to talented bands. There are some female vocals in here that will blow you into a winter wonderland, and some ska numbers that will have you skankin' with Frosty. Bands like One Eighty, The Dingees, Puller, and the Pep Squad (to name only a few) help put the X back into Christmas. (BC)

BEC 810 3rd Ave. #140-20 Seattle, WA. 98104

V/A - SELF PORTRAIT 7" Silver Scooter is mid-tempo dream rock. Evie has this female/male vocal thing that sounds like the Amboy Dukes 70's ish type of rock. Hushfeed has this off-key Superchunk style going on as Orange Glass does their alterno-rock thing. (BC)

Permafrost Records 341 ParkManor Blvd, Winnipeg MB, Canada R2V 4H5

V/A - UNKLE KUNKLE'S FAMILY PICNIC, CD Most of these bands sound pretty similar and mediocre, with few exceptions. Whether they're playing pop punk, snot punk, or ska, they must have been listening to the Ramones and NOFX at some point in time. (MD)

Unkle Kunkle Rekords 1730 S. Parkside Dr. Tempe, AZ 85281

V/A - THE YUKON AND YOU / PAJAMA PARTY IN A HAUNTED HIVE SPLIT, CD Indie pop from potato land. The Yukon and You have a dreamy quality with interesting instrumentation. Good music for a rainy day. Pajama Party... has, as you might have guessed from their name, a sound a lot like Beat Happening. Lots of creative mixing here. If you're into indie-pop, you really shouldn't miss this one. (MH)

Coming in Second 1807 Division Ave Boise ID 83706

V/A - ZUM AUDIO VOL. 2, CD 21 bands/artists of generally the indie-pop/rock fare on this superkeen second Zum compilation. Zum, as you may or may not know, is an excellent mostly music-based zine out of Berkeley—edited by George and Yvonne Chen. Being so highly vested in their music scene, it's impossible to not want to inform the larger world about all of these great indie bands. And that is exactly what they're doing here—with style and savvy I must say. There are too many bands/artists to list them all here but some of my favorite songs on this release come from Jen Wood, Aerial M, Modest Mouse, Rex, I Am Spoonbender, and Doug Shepherd—just to name a few. Smart packaging and cool music brought to you by these swell west coast kids. Much sweller than the kids from Shelbyville, ptoo. (PK)

Zum, PO Box 4449, Berkeley CA. 94704-0449

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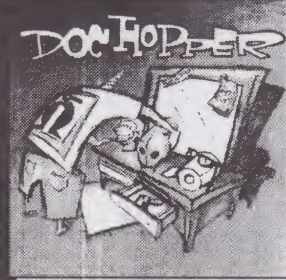
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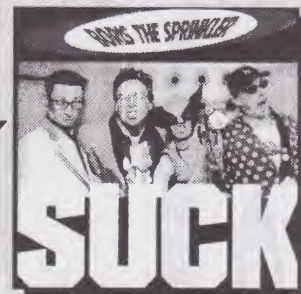
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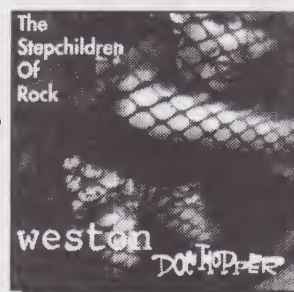
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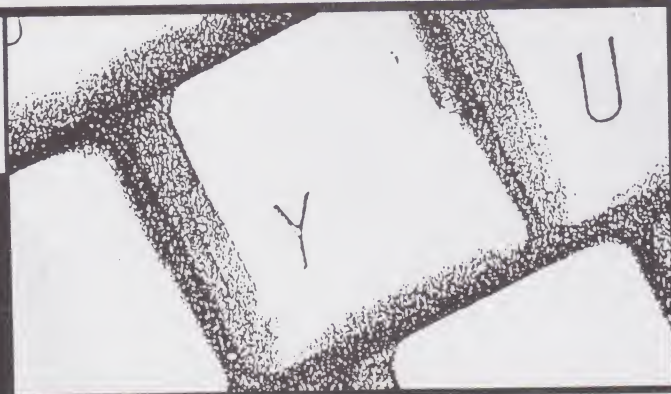
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PAPER ZINES



The Assassin and the Whiner #9 Wow. This is pretty cool stuff. The Assassin and the Whiner is a very deep, soul-searching comic written almost like a bunch of journal entries. The subjects range from alcoholism, loneliness, and isolation to house sitting and lesbian love. Regardless of the subjects, all the stories are told with a very personal edge and insightful compassion. Unlike many personal zines, this is actually interesting to read, while most zines just whine. I like this a lot. Very nice art, very nice stories, very recommended. (JK)

The Assassin and the Whiner, PO box 481051 Los Angeles, CA 90048 \$1.00ppd

Atheist Coalition Oct '98 An Atheist newsletter. About as exciting as that sounds. I don't believe in god, but Jesus, reading this made me realize that at least his followers can at least be interesting sometimes. (DS)

PO Box 4786 San Diego CA 92164-4786

Beckett Tapes #2 Nice cover shot of a masked thief taking it to a woman. This dude is pretty bizarre. It is hard to tell when he is kidding and when he is not too drunk. Well, it contains your basic reviews, stories, and rants sections. (BC)

\$1.00 Beckett 1250 Belle, Lakewood, OH. 44107

BlackMail #1 BlackMail is a zine that combines various old materials from old zines that these people did with some new stuff and weird comics. Mostly this consists of interviews and shit like that, along with a comic about a character called "the wicked eye" who has, you guessed it, a "wicked eye", and does mean stuff. This issue features an interview with Swiz, and a tour diary of the Grups. All the interviews and stuff is really old, with the Swiz interview being from 1989 and the Grups thing from 1992. This seems kind of thrown together and the print is very small and hard to read. Not horrible, but nothing too great. (JK)

BlackMail Industries, 1775 Franklin St. Berkeley, CA 94702 75cents

BlackMail #2 Well, another issue of BlackMail. This one is pretty much the same as the last one, but featuring: An old interview with 7 Seconds,

more Wicked Eye comics, more Grups tour diary and some book reviews and a story about being a punk in High School. This is actually a little better than issue 1, just because the print is bigger and easier to read. I think this zine would be better if it had a little more focus. It's not too bad now, but it's nothing special. (JK)

BlackMail Industries, 1775 Franklin St. Berkeley, CA 94702 75cents

Black Sheets #14 Another Gay-Bisexual zine filled with pictures of people that turn me all soft inside. Articles on Indian sex, and many personal sex stories. Reviews chicks with dicks, and a letters section. And like all sex zines this one is priced only for the fuckin' rich. For 6 bucks I could go out and get the real thing. (BC)

Black Books P.O. Box 31155, San Francisco, CA. 94131-0155

Brass Furnace Going Out #4 A cynical mish-mash zine put out by one mysterious Jane Lane. Dumb phone pranks, the inexplicable subconscious, moral crises out the wahoo, science fiction & cyberpunks, journal excerpts, and all sorts of clever clip art collaged together. This zine paints a pretty bleak and seemingly accurate picture of America. Interesting stuff but not advisable for pre-cocktail party mental stimulation. Jane Lane is cool—not to be confused with a certain narcissistic ex-editor of Sassy magazine. (PK)

75¢ + 1 stamp or trade; 17229 SW Greengate Dr., Sherwood OR, 97140

Burn Collector #9 Al tells you month by month how is life is going. He also includes his stories of run-ins with our ex-Pres Ronald Reagan. Interesting stuff! (BC)

Two stamps- Al Burian 307 Bluebridge rd. Carrboro, NC. 27510

Daydream Faerie #3 I reviewed a previous issue of Daydream Faerie a while back and can't help but notice how Nidhi's zine has progressed in only a span of a few issues. For example, it's physically bigger and boasts a lot more written content than before. This reads like somebody's diary in poetry and prose

form—some parts being painfully honest and personal. Figuring out this crazy thing called life, letting your long hair go, relationships, regret, etc. Hey, this girl digs The Raincoats so she must be good. (PK) \$1 or trade; 9 Cala Moreya, Laguna Niguel CA, 92677

The Devil's Other Story #1 I am going to assume that this is issue number one considering that the front cover does not indicate anything stating so. The Devil's Other Story is a simple, personal outlook on life in general by someone who seems to see a bleak future, yet clings to the hopes that his appreciation of the simplest things in our world will help him cope with hardships of living in the world today. A good number of these types of zines come off very pretentious but I can see some sincerity in this editor's words, a noteworthy trait in any works. (BR)

one stamp, 922 Dartmouthglen Way, Baltimore, MD 21212

Dial Tone A wonderfully well-written zine by Dave Laney who talks about the transient town of Chapel Hill and the immediate environment which surrounds him. From smoking to insomnia to mortality, the writing really sucks you in and is quite affecting. True testimony to the ol' quality not quantity adage. I particularly enjoyed the breakdown of how/why we choose our friends/acquaintances in our lives. Entirely plausible theories which are funny as hell. Whoops, at least I hope the humour was intentional, heh. (PK) \$?; PO Box 994, Chapel Hill NC, 27514

Dismal #10 Here lies a true to form DIY punk zine from Florida that features some political viewpoints and some music related jargon. The layout is on the sloppy side of the fence and the content is simple in it's subject matter. There is a humorous made up interview with Nada Surf but other than that, there is little else I found that was out of the ordinary. (BR) \$1, 5275 Whisper Drive, Coral Springs, FL 33967

Doris #11 Cindy is back with another completely compelling issue of Doris for y'all to sink yer teeth into. I pretty much read this one front to back, which is saying a lot coming from my zine-weathered self. The repercussions of Satan-worshipping chic.

more travel tales from Russia that succeed in bringing you to that same place which she writes about, a sweet story about homemade chairs and wild gardens, being/observing the new girl in the scene and seeing how uncool boys can be, booze, transience, booze, friends. Plus all of the tidbit personal reflections and comic illustrations which round out this non-linear slice of Cindy's life. At the risk of sounding corny, this really is a delight to read. (PK)
\$1.50 or \$1 + 2 stamps; PO Box 1734, Asheville NC, 28802

Failsafe #1 I have to be honest, I am not the biggest advocate for the personal zine reign of terror. Failsafe is a personal, emo type piece of work that has some creative flair in a very simplistic manner. It is written as most other personal zines are; indulging into the daily lives and sometimes getting so deep that it becomes hard to follow and thus, I begin to lose interest. I do not mean to discredit someone for pouring their heart out but it just is not anything that I want to read. (BR)
\$1.50, P.O. Box 683, Amherst, MA 01004-0683

Geek America #6 Geek America goes to Japan and delivers the reader a lengthy, 72 day journal of their trip to Japan. However, I am not much for diaries or journals of any kind. Other than that, the usual zine fare is found abroad; record and zine reviews, ads and some scattered writing. There is a section of stupid customer stories that may catch someone's eye but Geek America had little to offer picky old me. (BR)
\$1, P.O. Box 3195, Dana Point, CA 92629

Good Lookin' #1 DIY fashion in full effect. Regular people wearing regular (and not-so-regular) clothes, peeks into the lives of DIY designers, advice, mystery cosmetics reviews. Full color in an issue one is what I call cajones! This zine, while thin, holds more promise than the entire dairy case at the grocery store. Live it. (DS)
\$3; 1822 S. DesPlaines Chicago IL 60616

Grump #1 You really have to be into the bands / people interviewed in Grump to even want to read it. I either haven't heard them or could care less about Rob Vasquez, Guitar Wolf, or Bill Johnson and these interviews encompass a large portion of this fanzine. As usual, the remainder is rounded off with reviews and a story about the Hill-Ford Thunder Nationals Monster Truck show. (BR)
\$1, 309 S. New St., Champaign, IL 61820

The Gyhad #1 & #2 I decided it would be easier to just combine these two issues because they are just one continuous story and it would be pointless to

review them separately. The Gyhad is a strange comic story about one man's decent into madness and violence. The comic art in this is different than I have seen before, being put together with what almost look like separate sketch book drawings pasted over with word bubbles and story boxes added later. The effect is interesting, but sort of confusing visually at times. The guy that makes this must be very rich, because this is all printed very high quality on glossy, full sized paper bound in separate binding rings. This isn't so amazing in itself, but what is amazing is that this only costs 25cents an issue! I would be surprised if this guy can break even, but I wish him luck. Overall, the story is interesting, and might be worth checking out if you like this type stuff. (JK)

Jeff Dalrymple 4745 Pawley Swamp Rd. lot#6 Conway, SC 29526 25cents

I Stand Alone #11 Kid Dynamite, Buried Alive, Ebullition, Out, and By the Grace of God's tour diary. And a very large discussion of growing up Hardcore. Like it's a real suburban subculture or something. With comments made by such hardcore people as H2O, Civ, Inside the Civ guy states that 'just because people see you on MTV, they think that you are rich..' I thought it was that you look silly when you are on MTV, not rich. You cry, you laugh, you weep, and you become hardcore. (BC)
\$2.00 P.O. Box 321 Buckner, KY. 40010

Impact Press #16 A liberal leftist fanzine that is filled with ads from big punk labels? I guess this pays the printing costs although I think more "punks" these days would be more interested in what new record is coming out on Fat than anything written inside. This zine reminds me of Tailspins from Evanston, IL with the exception of being politically minded. As political as this zine is, there really is not anything out of the ordinary in here. However, the article on the ID chip left a lump in my throat. I just have to wonder if the article was written from the Christians "mark of the beast" standpoint or not. Interesting in any event. (BR)
free, 10151 University Blvd, Suite 151, Orlando, FL 32817

Imperatives for the Anti-Point: World Takeover #1 This is one of those fucking tiny, hard to read zines that make my eyes hurt. Imperatives? is a little book of seemingly unrelated hard to read pieces of text that fit together artfully in a nice attractive little package. From a design standpoint, Imperatives is

very nicely done, with interesting layout and text design. In terms of actual content however, this is rather lacking. Most of the pages (of small painful) print I could manage to read, all were pretty pointless. There seems to be a theme in many of the pages of trying to maintain artistic integrity in a modern society, but no real point is ever reached. Basically, this is cool to look at, but is just to damn hard to read. If you like design, then give it a look, if not, then don't. (JK)

1233 Arguello, apt.7 San Francisco, CA 94122 no price listed

International Straightedge Bulletin #23 Good lord, how can anyone put out 23 issues of a zine on their own? Regardless, this zine exists to serve as the newsletter for straightedge hardcore from a European standpoint. It has some informative reports on scenes from all corners of the globe, an interview with Catweazel and some reviews. I have to complain though, the reviews are too short to be at all informative. In the future, longer and more descriptive reviews would make this zine a winner. (BR)
\$1, BP 7523, 35 075 Rennes cedex 3, France

It's Alive #17 I was shocked when I opened my review materials for the next issue and found a new issue of It's Alive. This zine has been around for as long as I can remember and has stayed true to form from the beginning. In a day and age when most zines are going for a professional look, It's Alive is doing things the traditional way and that gets instant approval in my book. Issue #17 is an all photo issue with excellent photos from Fred Hammer's archives, ranging from By The Grace Of God and Good Riddance to B'Last and Unity. He writes some personal feelings on each photo that gives you an image of the time and place, giving the zine a real nostalgic touch. Punk needs more zines like this one. (BR)

\$1, P.O. Box 6326, Oxnard, CA 93031-6326

The Jacob Savage Newsletter #einz Nice zine with a cool black on black printed glossy cover that has been done before (but never grows old really). Everything about this is rather standard except for the record reviews. Normally the part I hate to look at the most is improved. He only reviews flea market finds ranging from a quarter to a dollar in price. Pretty cool for an issue or two and will probably turn into a top notch zine if Jacob keeps working at it. (EA)

\$2 740-A 14th Street #138 San Francisco, CA 94114

Our review policy is very simple: Independently published? We review it. However, that doesn't mean that it gets a good review. If a reviewer likes your zine, you get a good review. If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your zine is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

Jehovah's Witness Protection Program Written by the same person as The Reformation of Kings (also reviewed this issue), JWPP makes me think this guy leans more in the direction of madman than genius. (DS)

Weak Publications c/o Mark Bruback 2608 2nd Ave. Ste 184 Seattle WA 98121-1276

M.A.G. #3 So, this is what we have come to now? Hardcore has crossed so far over into the realm of metal that it has sadly become one and the same. Granted, I grew up with metal but I quickly learned to differentiate the two. Hardcore and punk is something that used to be unique and special like no other but since the recent past's inception of metal into the scene, hardcore has become tainted and I find it very disturbing. However, for you "Hardcore" kiddies out there who can't get enough of bad nineties metal (not metal influenced hardcore) and naked women in sexually explicit positions sprawled about Cradle Of Filth t-shirts, then M.A.G.'s features and chats with Fear Factory, Slayer, Cradle Of Filth, Earth Crisis, Upheaval, Anthrax and Buried Alive will probably suit your metal fancy. As for me, I will wait for this mass marketing of "heavy" music to blow over so hardcore can be real again. (BR)

\$.25, P.O. Box 30374, Indianapolis, IN 46230-0374

Machine-Animal Collages #2 Wow! This is awesome. Machine-Animal collages are just what it says: A collection of machine-animal collages done by a guy named Nicolas Lampert. The machine-animal collages are Dada- like combinations of pictures of animals and machine parts, which combine to form what look like bizarre cyborg animals and cars and tanks with animal parts. The pictures all look as though they were taken from some kind of strange medical textbook, with no words or explanation, only titles listed in the back. I really enjoyed this quite a lot. My only complaint is that quite a few of the photocopies in this zine are not very high quality and are hard to see. Despite some bad printing, this is still very cool, and I hope to see more Animal- Machine collages from Mr. Lampert in the future, and hopefully he will invest in some better printing so his art can be seen as much as it deserves. (JK)

Nicolas Lampert, PO box 11351, Oakland, CA 94611
\$3.00/2.00 in person

Multiball #15 Wow! Number fifteen already, I have thought that this zine is where it will be, a nice little zine for a small market. Do you want to read about the hot spots to play pinball and hear some garage style punk at the same time (psst, I do). Well, you probably don't and that is okay with Multiball, hell they don't need ya'. Nice interview with main

Telstar Records man (thanks for the DMZ single boys) and a good interview with a pinball tech that was at least not a band interview. Life is good, pinball is good and I have run out of things to say after reviewing this zine as many times as I have all I want you to know is pick up your \$4.50 and send away for Multiball and get a rave up split single (Tara Key / Dickel brothers) to boot. (EA)

Multiball PO Box 40005 PDX OR 97240

My Views Change Over Time #2 Wow, what a great name! The author questions his emotions and feelings and realizes that they may change in time. Inside are some facts about U.S. weapons spending, and some thoughts about the color issue. Short and sweet. (BC)

Free! (Send him a stamp) Rob 2371/2 SW 2CD Place, Gainesville, FL 32601

Noises from the Garage #8 The best regular newsprint zine of the garage punk world. After eight issues it's getting even better with more interviews than you can shake a stick at, this guy must have no life except to eat, and breathe punk rock and or roll. Cool Dictators, Crusaders, Waistcoats, Donnas and so many more interviews. This is the zine to keep up and new bands and learn about some old ones as well. (EA)

Brian Marshall 8811 Rue Riviera, Apt. 3A Indianapolis, IN 46226

No Power for the Little People #2 Emo-tinged writing coupled with photographs of war. The juxtaposition of these two elements creates some interesting tensions/meanings but ultimately this isn't as good as its premise. (DS)

237 1/2 SW 2nd Pl. Gainesville FL 32601

Our Cards Punk/hc zine from Japan written in—surprise!—Japanese. It looks cool but it's too bad I can't understand what the content is actually saying. I can tell you that half of this issue is comprised of columns by Keiko Sakakibara (Big Spliff zine), Akane Nakamura (Fringe zine), Haruhiko Ishida (P.M.A. zine), Takashi Ikeda (Will You? zine), and some zine reviews too. The other half consists of band pages to accompany the 13-band CD which comes with the zine. Evade, Liftman, Pause, Shattered Into Pieces, Spraypaint, Swipe, Tami, Verry Good Man (what a name! heh.), Youth Strike Force...but my favourite songs are by the Hyper Hindu Squatters, Mountain Dew, Screaming Fat Rat, and Wisher. Some of the bands sing in English which make them sound like Shonen Knife meets Crimpshrine—how good is that! (PK)

\$7; Snuffy Smile, 4-24-4-302 Daizawa, Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo 155, Japan

Paper and Staples #2 9 months worth of Mark's rants, personal reflections, and stories, that all cover much ground. (BC)

\$1.00 269 Lodge Ln. Grays, Essex, RM17 5PR, England

Punk Shocker #8 Ever since discovering punk rock, I never found any solace in listening to British punk or punk influenced by the aforementioned. This fanzine is filled to the brim with bands of this genre. I tried to read this thing as best as possible but I cannot lie, nothing in here caught my interest. For those out there whose heart still skips a beat when listening to Discharge, this publication has chats with Wolfpack, GBH and the UK Subs, as well as music related filler. (BR)

\$.50, P.O. Ita, Newcastle upon tyne, ne99 Ita, England

The Real Life Letters of a Boy #8 A brilliant idea: this zine reprints letters and postcards in their original form and in their entirety received by the author. Unfortunately, the way the idea plays itself out leaves me wanting. Simply put, the letters & postcards just aren't that interesting and the act of reading uninteresting mail made out to someone else left me feeling a little creepy. (DS)

\$1.50; 221 Oakcrest Dr. Wilmington NC 28403

The Reformation of Kings Rants about the scene, politics and modern life written either by a genius or a madman. (DS)

Weak Publications c/o Mark Bruback 2608 2nd Ave. Ste 184 Seattle WA 98121-1276

Robot #1 This is pretty cool. Robot is a cool little graphic design zine that is composed of work by a bunch of different designers. Apparently, each designer was given a word, and asked to design a page around that word or concept, with no rules other than it had to be b&w and include the page number. The results are a mixed bag, but for the most part pretty cool. I really like the concept of designers just being able to design whatever they want, and I think there should be more zines like this. It would be cool to see an issue of Robot in color, or maybe just two colors, like red and black. If you are at all interested in Graphic Design, you would probably find this worth checking out. (JK)

Robot, c/o Dan, 62, Creekwood Sq. Cincinnati, OH 45246, 3811

Saturated Fat #8 Reading as many zines as I do each issue, it becomes hard to find one or two that really stand out. Saturated Fat is among the average featuring interviews with Rancid, The Suicide Machines, The Boils and H2O and other usual additions. The editor seems to be into the bigger punk / hardcore acts that do not interest me and events that I avoid like the plague (ie, Warped

Tour). The cover price and the light hearted sense of humor are the only saving graces but not enough to cause my review to turn positive. (BR)
free, P.O. Box 11, Lewisville, PA 19351

Skatedork #1 A DIY skating zine. While this is an issue one and certainly has its (very) rough edges, the energy of the authors is infectious and over all this full-sized newsprint skatezine holds a whole lot of promise. The definitive history of my arch nemesis the ollie is worth the cost of admission alone. I can't wait to see another issue. (DS)
\$1; 221 Spring Ridge Dr. Berkeley Heights NJ 07922

Skinnyzine #12 Perzines are a difficult thing to do well. You have to skirt this very thin line between revealing so much about yourself that it's not relevant to anyone but yourself and being so vague that your writing ends up being completely meaningless. There are few zines that can strike just the right balance, being both personal yet universal at the same time. Skinny zine manages to pull it off with style to spare. (DS)
\$1; PO Box 890701 Oklahoma City OK 73189-0701

Skyscraper #3 A very well done zine that has many ads in with an interview with Kent McClard, CIV, Eyelid, and a few others. Inside is also a good article on viruses and all that icky shit. And the review sections contain music and print. There is even a pretty decent Punk Planet review in there. But he stated that he doesn't like our review section, so why am I even writing this? He won't read it. (BC)
\$2.00 P.O. Box 4432, Boulder, CO. 80306

Soap and Spikes #5 Here lies another zine that covers music that I never listened to and it is probably safe to say that I never will. This zine is punk rock but in a sense that is more stylish and less realistic, or at least it seems this way. In any event, the interviews with Don Bolles, Ill Repute, Toxic Reasons, Tony James and Brandon Cruz should tide over the spike haired punk rock reader until the next issue hits the streets. (BR)
\$2, 431 Burlington Ave., Apt #5, Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7S 1R3

Shitwiper #4 and 5 The editor of this zine has very diverse tastes, ranging from ska to punk to hardcore and all the way down to good ol' power violence. The layout is a bit jumbled but kept simple enough to prevent one's eyes from becoming sore. There are chats with Siren, Apocrypha, Barrier, Homecide, The Union and Your Mother, followed by reviews and some scattered writings. Nothing out of the ordinary here but worth a look if you are a fan of the bands mentioned above. (BR)
\$3, P.O. Box 37 ACPO, Cubao, Q.C. 1135, Philippines

(Sic) Vice & Verse #3 Sic is a rather well put together collection of poetry and prose by a variety

of young writers, along with a few interviews and articles and a couple weird comics. Normally I don't really get into too many poetry zines, but a lot of the stuff in here was really cool. The prose and fiction was also for the most part very well done. I enjoyed the story about the LA riots and the piece about the Burning Man festival and the column by Michael Simmons, just to name a few. Overall, this is a very interesting and thought provoking publication. I liked the amount of variety and quality that is portrayed here. Normally when you have a zine that is all over the place like this, a lot of the stuff isn't very good, but Sic avoids that trap. I Recommend this. (JK)

(Sic) Vice & Verse, PO box 27635 Los Angeles, CA 90027

Stuck #2 Classic zine stuff here. Stuck does what zines do best: it takes a topic, poses it to a bunch of people and prints what comes out. This issue's topic is "growing up" and the results are funny and tragic and exhilarating and boring and all points in between. Compulsively readable. (DS)

\$1; c/o Lewis Houston RR#1 1168 Nescopeck PA 18635

Sub-pulse #5 It seems strange to review a magazine that the author himself explains is the last issue and goes to great lengths to point that out repeatedly as well as to put snide little comments explaining how everything in this issue is "self-indulgent." So you know what? I won't. (DS)

1215 E. Hyde Park Blvd. Apt 109 Chicago, IL 60615

Suburban Subway Another 1/2 sized zine filled with rants about the author's life, rants about other people's lives, reviews and boring interviews with bands you've never heard of. There is nothing here to distinguish this above the pack. (DS)

943 West Abby Dr. Medina OH 44256

Tape-Gun #2 The layout and handwritten (or drawn) text makes this zine a real effort. I mean effort in that it took a lot of effort, not in reading it. Nice little quirky interviews that seem to come out from crazy girls in Toronto. A little better than issue one, and by four or five this may rise to a higher zine status where riches are absorbed. Cool stuff: Johnny Cohen, Muffin Bones, Davn Brainard, etc. (EA)

PO Box 68568, 360A Bloor St. W. Toronto ON M5S 1X1 Canada

Train Wreck #3 Based on the photos of two classic wrestlers on the inside front & back covers, I thought I had stumbled upon a nicely produced, exquisitely written DIY wrestling zine. Instead, I found that I had stumbled upon a nicely produced, exquisitely written DIY music zine. Sure, Royal

Trux or The Lynnfield Pioneers are no "Killer" Karl Krupp or Bobby Kay, but it was a nice change from some of the crappy 1/2 sized music zines out there. (DS)

\$1.50; PO Box 652 Sydney Nova Scotia B1P 6H7 Canada

Widespread #1 As I say to myself and others time and time again, I wish I had done better in high school because paying the price now is not something I would do over again. On that note, I never took a language class either, therefore, my chance to read this zine is thrown for a loop. This entire zine is written in a foreign tongue so the interviews with Ten Yard Fight, Rudy Medea, The Van Pelt and Tear Me Down had to go unread. However, the layout is very crisp so to those who have language abilities beyond that of English, this zine deserves a read. (BR)

\$3, Via M. Curie 23/A, 40026 Imola (BO)

Words that Jumped Ronnie #1 Words that Jumped Ronnie? Hmm, I don't really know what to make of this exactly, but I like it. Much of this zine is balanced between political type poetry and articles and personal-journal type entries. I enjoyed the political rants and writing the most, and the William Reich story and the section about celebrities and our media were very accurate and thought provoking. All the writing in this zine is very good, and despite the wide variety of subjects covered, the whole thing holds together well. I think this zine works because the writers actually finish their thoughts, and reach some kind of conclusion, where as many zines have stories that start out interesting but end before making any kind of point. Recommended by me. (JK)

Brian Floss Records 1015 North King's Road #313 Los Angeles, CA 90069

You look Just like an Elvis From Hell #1 This is just about the most fucking stupid piece of shit I have ever read in my entire life, and in a strange kind of way I sort of like it. This "story" by Cole Proto, focuses upon a cannibal killer who travels across the country killing various people and eating their faces then becoming sick and puking everywhere. Along with killing people, this cannibal killer goes to punk rock shows and eventually meets a young woman whom he falls in love with and then graphically fucks, in a scene that reads like a bad Penthouse forum. When I say that I sort of like this, I think I actually mean I am sort of morbidly fascinated by how bad this is, and even more fascinated that it seems intentionally bad. I guess there is a line between "intentionally bad but good" and "intentionally bad but bad" that this rides very closely. (JK)

Cathouse Press, PO box 1421, Oshkosh, WI 54902 \$2.00

1. Taking A Chance On Chances LP/CD: an international compilation split between slamp and troubleman. contains previously unreleased songs by: red monkey, atom and his package, small black pig, monorchid, bilge pump, assembly line people program, missy x, russia, bette davis and the balconettes, old hearts club, pee chees, salty skull, (young) pioneers, milky wimpshake, computer cougar, tunic, replikants, witchknot, full boney, international strikeforce. (part one of a two-part compilation undertaking for troubleman.)

3. Harriet The Spy "Unfuckwithable" LP/CD

4. The Hated "Desmond Outcast" 7"

5. Hal Al Shedad "Textures Of Tomorrow" LP/CD, "Running And Falling" 7" (these songs are not on the album).

6. Red Monkey "Make The Moment" LP/CD, "The Time Is Right" 7" : (these songs are not on the album either)

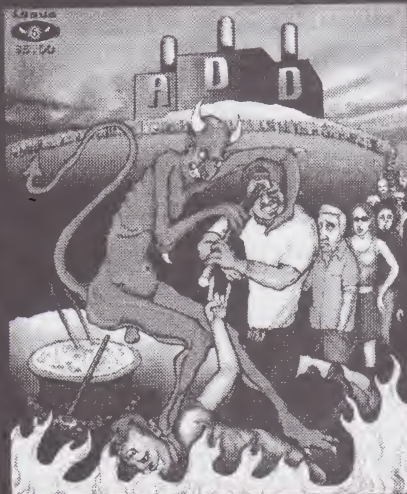
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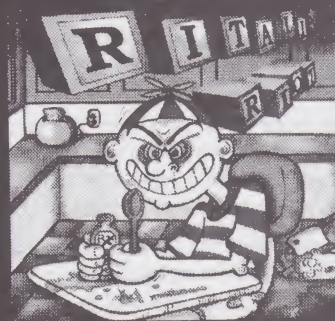
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\$10

Cooter "All Bets Off" (GFY). CD \$6

Hankshaw "Every Day I Wish You Harm" (Doghouse) CD \$5
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Oldies but Goodies V/A (Negative Progression): 16 bands.

Xanadu V/A (Rhetoric) : 19 unreleased tracks. Everready.

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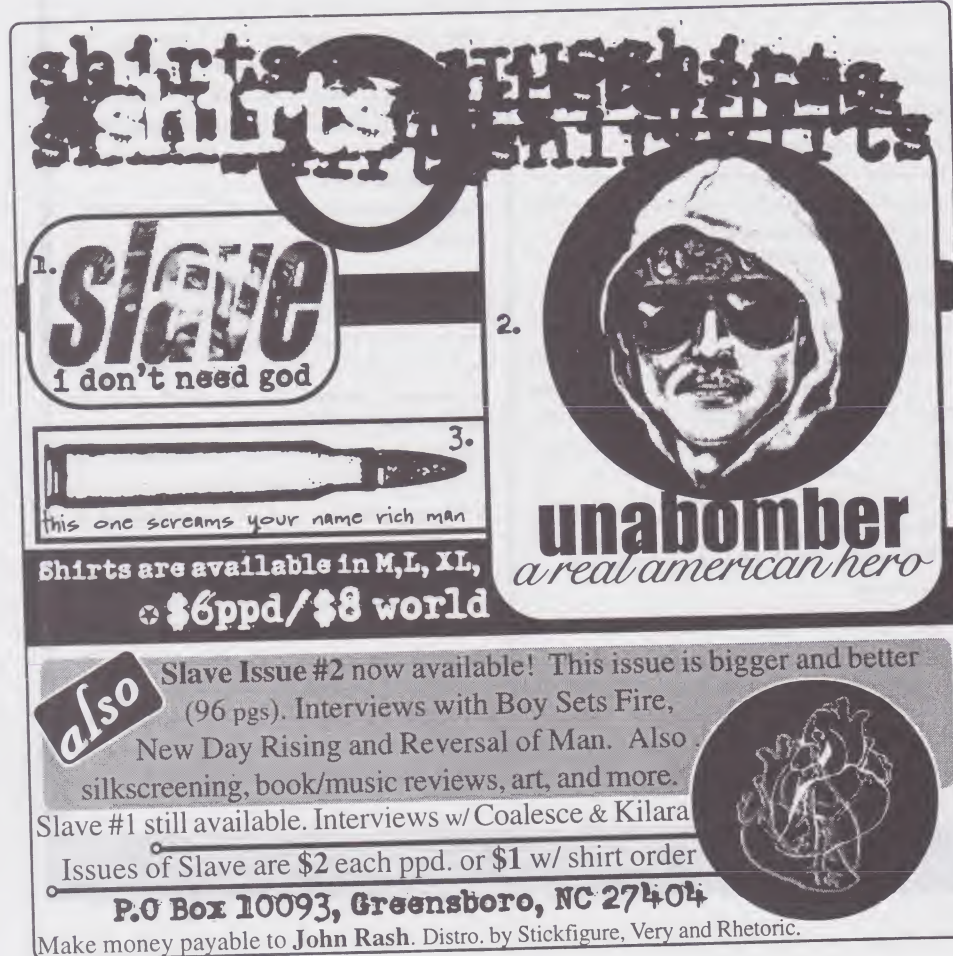
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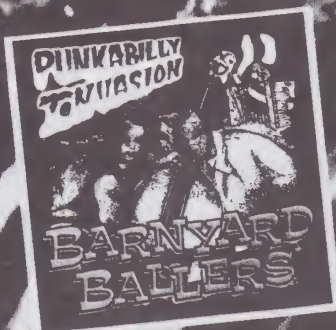
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PP24 THE ART & DESIGN ISSUE. PP24 attempts to paint a picture (no pun intended) of the current state of art and punk by talking to the people doing it. Interviewed in this issue are comic activist SETH TOBOKMAN, designers ART CHANTRY and HOUSE INDUSTRIES, photographers CYNTHIA CONNOLLY, CHRISTIE PIPER and PAUL DRAKE and tattoo artist KIM SAIGH. Articles about the poster art of FRANK KOZIK, STATE SUBSIDIZING OF THE ARTS, the CURRENT STATE OF RADICAL ART, and DESIGN IN THE UNDERGROUND. 164 pgs. **multiple covers no longer available**

PP25 THE GROWING GIRL SKATE UNDERGROUND in a word: inspiring! Also in this issue are interviews with SPAZZ, DESOTO RECORDS, The WORLD INFERNO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY and BY THE GRACE OF GOD's Duncan Barlow explains why he's retiring from the hardcore scene. Plus a talk with OUTPUNK's Matt Wobensmith about why he's stopping his seminal zine & label. Articles on SPOKEN WORD & 25 YEARS OF CHOICE. Plus, PP25 looks at the REAL REASONS THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO GO BACK TO IRAQ. 144 pgs.

PP26 STEVE ALBINI, talks about everything from working for major labels to playing guitar to the state of punk rock today. Also interviewed in PP26: AVAIL, SMART

WENT CRAZY, SERVOTRON, POLYVINYL RECORDS, COMPOUND RED and RED MONKEY. Articles include a piece about TOUCH & GO RECORDS' RECENT LAWSUIT WITH THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS, NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, and an expose on the less than progressive politics of healthfood chain WHOLE FOODS. Plus, PP writes the story of THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GRAFFITI ARTIST TIE. Jam-packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A talk with KATHLEEN HANNA. In this rare, in-depth interview, Kathleen talks about the end of Bikini Kill, her new project Julie Ruin and her feelings on punk, feminism, economics, art and more. Also interviewed in PP27: DISCOUNT, CHROM-TECH, ASSÜCK, the PEECHEES, and PRANK RECORDS' Ken Sanderson. Articles include "Rebels Without a Cause," Punk Planet looks into the GROWING HYSTERIA SURROUNDING TEEN VIOLENCE. Jon Strange breaks the law and travels with a group BRINGING HUMANITARIAN AID INTO IRAQ. Marc Bayard is the first person to teach A COLLEGE COURSE BASED ON PUNK—he writes about his experience in "Punk 101." Finally, TWO ANTI-RACIST SKINHEADS WERE MURDERED IN LAS VEGAS THIS JULY—Punk Planet investigates. 156 pgs.

PP28 looks at the GROWING HEALTHCARE CRISIS IN AMERICA THROUGH THE EYES OF A OFTEN-OVERLOOKED GROUP: MUSICIANS. As author Alex McCown explains, "a grand total of zero labels in America today currently provide health care for their artists." McCown tells the story of a number of different

bands—both signed and unsigned, indie and major—and how they have struggled under a system that cares more about producing records than the people recording them. Also in this issue: Punk Planet continues its series of interviews with influential people in punk with a talk with KEVIN SECONDS. Plus, FILMMAKER PENELOPE SPHEERIS talks with Punk Planet film columnist Sarah Jacobson about her new film, DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION 3. Other interviews include: JETS TO BRAZIL, THE GET UP KIDS, ATOM AND HIS PACKAGE and RESIN RECORDS. PP28 also delves into the current sampling controversy surrounding NEGATIVLAND. Other articles in PP28 include a look at THE "LEGACY" OF BILL CLINTON—find out 10 real reasons to not like the guy. Plus, the article "It's (not) a White World" investigates RACE IN PUNK—it's not a pretty picture. Finally, "Return to the Holy Land" brings us to ISRAEL THROUGH THE EYES OF AN EXPATRIATE. All this plus the regular columns, reviews DIY and much, much more. Our last newsprint issue!! 156 pgs.

PP29 checks in with SLEATER-KINNEY on the eve of the release of their follow-up to the wildly successful Dig Me Out. Has widespread critical acclaim changed Sleater-Kinney or have they stayed true to their roots and to themselves—PP29 answers the question. In addition to S-K, PP29 features a talk with KID DYNAMITE, the new

band that has risen out of the influential Lifetime's ashes. PP29 also features a talk with The Metroshifter's K. SCOTT RICHTER, one of the Louisville scene's most prolific and eccentric personalities. And speaking of personalities, PP29 includes a talk with JESSICA HOPPER, publisher of HIT IT OR QUIT IT ZINE, one of the most controversial reads in punkdom! Also we stop in for a chat with emo sweethearts RAINER MARIA. Any feature articles? Goddamn right there are. Kim Bae brings you aboard as LOS CRUDOS TOURS SOUTH AMERICA. Author Mimi Nguyen (PP28's It's (not) a White World) takes A PERSONAL LOOK AT VIETNAM—as a homeland, as a war and as a state of mind. Also featured in PP29 is a look at THE USE OF PEPPER SPRAY BY THE POLICE; this "non-lethal" weapon is more dangerous than you may think. Additionally, PP29 takes a look at a unique bike program in Bloomington, Indiana—FIND OUT HOW SOME USED BIKES AND A LOT OF YELLOW PAINT CAN HELP CREATE REVOLUTION. Finally, PP29 looks at the GROWING UNREST IN THE KOSOVO REPUBLIC. Also, this is our first issue printed on high-quality 100% recycled paper and featuring our complete redesign. 136 pgs.

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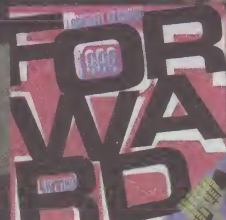
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